

Issue Number 24. Fall. Interviews with Isis, The Explosion, John Frusciante, Only Crime, Punkvoter.com / Fat Mike, Brian Lovro / The Blinding Light, The Paper Brigade / Matt Rubin, Backstabbers Inc, Love Me Destroyer & The Distance. Always free.

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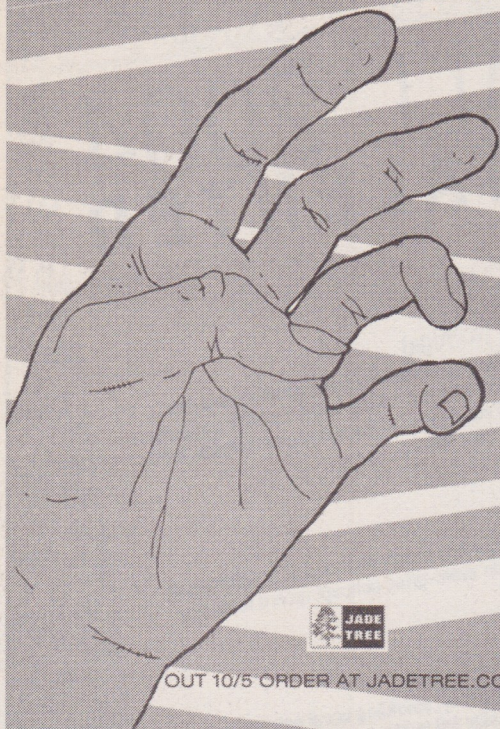


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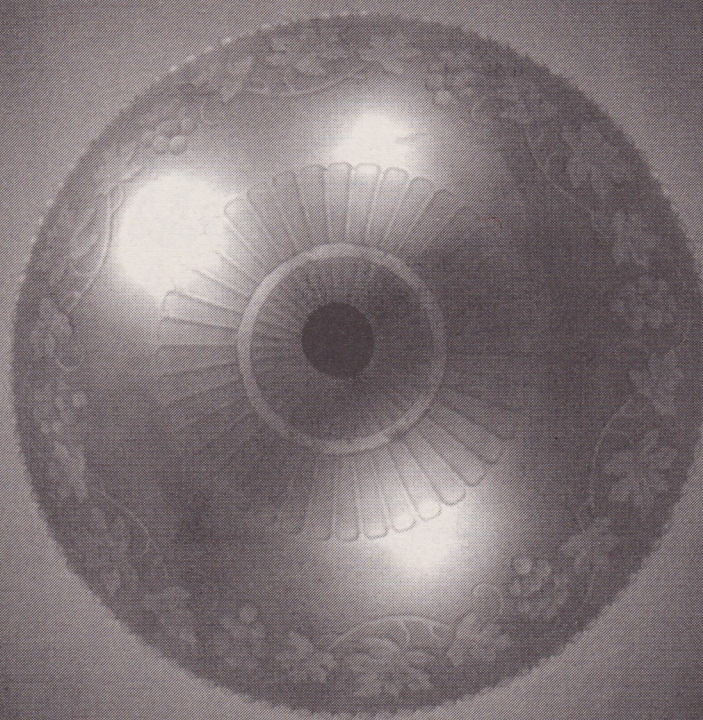
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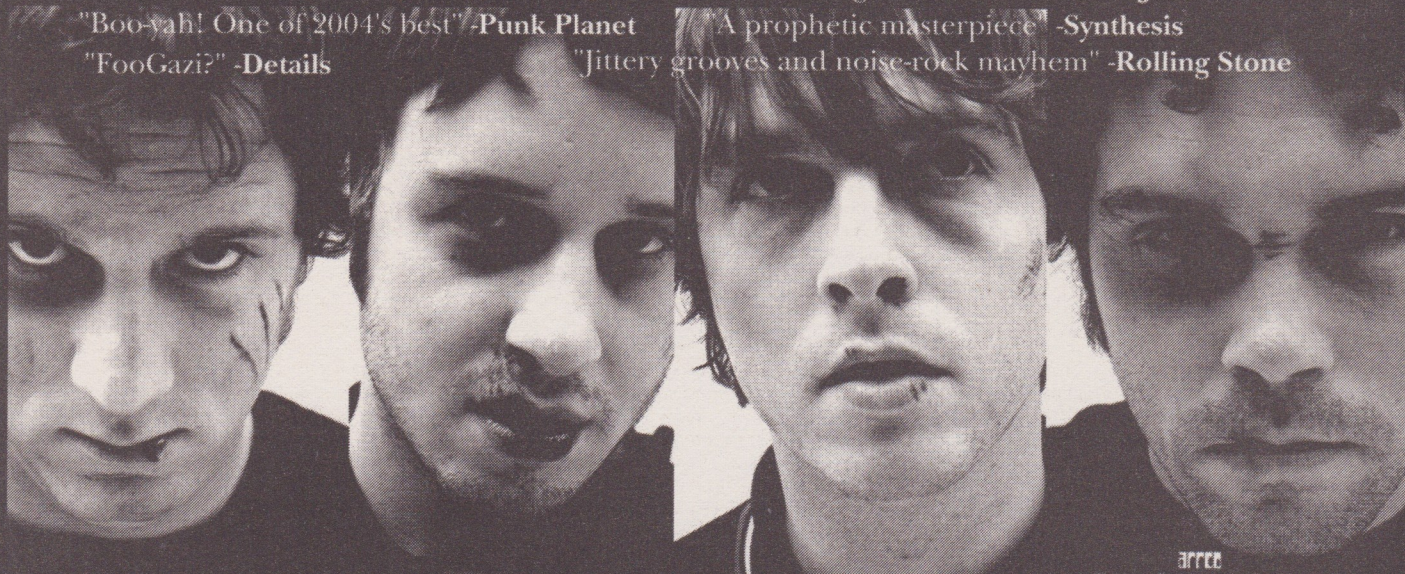
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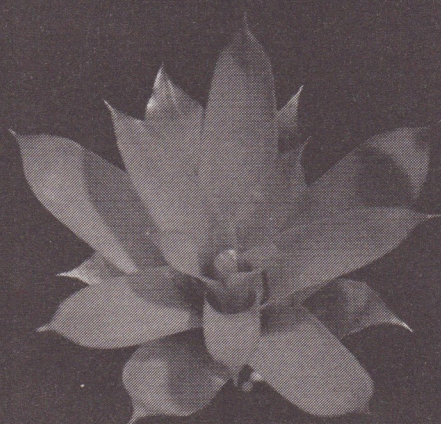
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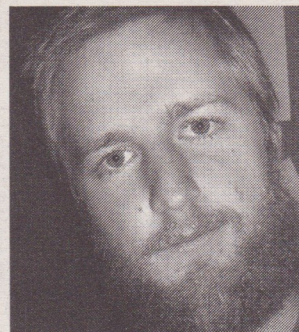
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GOSSIP

BEARDS: SOOO 2004



A new Pixies record? Yes, that's the big rumor lately. The Pixies might be making the wrong move like Janes Addiction and countless others have, or they might surprise us with a long lost masterpiece, I guess we will find out if this album is released, and then of course leaked onto the internet. The band plans to record and release a new full length album in 2005. Many people have mixed feelings about this, a reunion tour is one thing - a full reunion is another. Plus did you hear that exclusive iTunes track they released? Pure garbage. It isn't the Pixies - it was a Kim Deal song, and it was weak. Anyhow, we will wait and see what happens with this record. Frank Black has recently commented that we would like to get legendary songwriter Tom Waits is his first choice for producer. Black has these words on Waits, "I like the way his records sound." Short but sweet. > Speaking of The Pixies, them and many others had to scramble to book a summer tour recently because of the failed Lollapalooza tour. Lack of ticket sales put the final nail in the coffin of this summer tour. At least maybe someone will take note that most people can't afford the "average" ticket price. A recent study showed that that 2 years ago the average ticket price to a concert (obviously not DIY smaller shows) was \$24.00 per ticket. In 2004 it's \$45.00 per ticket. You can thank CD burning for this upward trend. The more money artist lose in royalties the more they charge you to see them live. Sad but true. > Beards are the new thing in the scene, or so it seems. It's fun to see what happens each year. Where are the mesh hats to the side? Oh that was last summer. Either way it's funny to see clean cut kids try to look crusty, or dare I say grunge? The king is Marc from Respira (pictured above). He takes the cake with his summertime beard. Not too disgusting, but not too perfect. Just right. Kudos Marc. > The Blood Brothers sign to V2 Records, fingers crossed it will be a success because the world needs this band in the spotlight. They are different and a threat - which is PUNK. Death Cab For Cutie toured with Blink 182.....OK. > Coheed and Cambria's first in a series of comic books is now available their web store. Google search for it, I'm too lazy. > Brian Wilson has been making a lot of people, oh let's face it, he's making a lot of Beach Boys fans very happy lately, myself included. After digging through reels and reels of tapes containing the myriad pieces of his lost masterpiece, Smile, Wilson will be finally releasing it after 37 years! This is the record that if released it would have blown away "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band", which was released that same year. I know, that sounds and seems impossible, but if you are one of the lucky people to have the 1966

bootleg of Smile you know this to be true. These songs are ahead of its time and out of this world. The only (BIG) difference with this version of Smile is that it was re-recorded this year with Brian's back up band, not the Beach Boys. Why re-record it and take out the best part, The Beach Boys? Maybe Brian doesn't want Mike Love to get a penny off of this version, who knows. Most of us would rather have the 1966 version of Smile in our hands Sep 28th, but we will take what we can get. Brian Wilson's "Smile" tour hits the road this fall and winter and he will perform the Smile album in its entirety. > First Morrissey and now Ian Brown. Both solo artist who spend more or less a decade proving they don't have to rehash old classic from previous bands, have finally given in. Brown did more or less the whole first Stone Roses record live recently and will keep them in his upcoming sets. Very cool. > In "Dare I Say A Shitty Band Did Something Good" news, Disturbed apparently beat the shit out of Finch on stage no less at a concert in Pennsylvania. I'm not a fan of violence, but when a band of kids talk shit in a big magazine they have to face the response it will get. Although before the fight ensued Finch guitarist said it was "all a joke". The bad blood between the bands came from an interview in which Finch made comments about Disturbed and it's lead singer. "I'd shoot him in the fucking head," he told MeanStreet magazine. "I'd rip his stupid little piercings out. They're just cheesy. It bums me out because their music is terrible, and what they're all about, it's just shit." Well they got beat up in front of thousands of people. Damn, I want to see some footage of this. That is just straight up funny. Do we see a trend here? "Numetal" bands taking out their low units on newer emo-core bands? Just a few months back Godsmack beat up Story Of The Year backstage. Still funny. > Ex-members of Karp and Murder City Devils are in a new band called Big Business. They signed to Hydra Head Records, we like Hydra Head. > Los Angeles favorites 400 Blows signed to Buddyhead. > More big hype follows Plot To Blow Up The Eiffel Tower as they recently signed to Revelation Records. > In "we announced we are breaking up 8 months ago" news Shai Hulud have delayed their last show because Hellfest (slated to be the last show) only gave the band a 25 minute set. The band felt it wasn't enough time for a last show - so they play to play one final show, with a totally new random singer. Auditions were being held as we go to press! Hey lets be the new lead singer of Shai Hulud for one night, sounds like a sweet idea. > 3/4 of Year of The Rabbit are now in a band called The Joy Circuit. Sounds cool considering they were a great backing band for Ken in Year of The Rabbit. > Jello Biafra send out a gossip like email about his legal battles that have now ended with his ex-bandmates in The Dead Kennedys. It reads "SCREWED BY GREED AND THE U.S. LEGAL SYSTEM - BUT WHAT ELSE IS NEW? I and Alternative Tentacles have

thrown up our hands at getting any justice from the three ex-Dead Kennedys' greed-motivated lawsuits, and the shocking denial of our appeal. The court refused to hear any evidence of the many shady things they have done since the trial. But that does not mean that the verdict and court rulings are the real truth any more than George Dubya was democratically elected president. They just got away with a lot of lies. O.J. Simpson would be proud. What they have done to Dead Kennedys since their hostile takeover speaks for itself. Their money uber alles mentality has more in common with Dick Cheney than the vision and principles our band stood for. I'm as proud of Dead Kennedys as I ever was. It seems obvious I love and respect what we accomplished far more than they ever will. If they force me to blow the whistle again, I will. We'll continue to oppose the dumbing down and pimping of the DK catalogue, phony "reunion" shows (often with my likeness in the ads), selling my image into video games, their refusal to show me all the books, blah, blah, etc., etc. Ending our defense against their main legal attack does not mean I endorse or recommend any Dead Kennedys releases on Decay Music, Manifesto, Plastic Head, Cleopatra, MVD, etc. I can't. I'm too ashamed. - Jello Biafra." Good gossip, band product - believe us, don't support any of this new DK records. No quality what so ever. > Although this is old news, still many people haven't seen footage or even heard of the Glenn Danzig beat down. The short story goes like this - North Side Kings got bumped because of Danzig, they confronted him and after two questions Danzig pushes the lead singer and the rest is caught on tape and historic. Don't get me wrong - it was sort of devastating for a day to see a punk idol like Danzig get beat - but he got what he deserved. So much for Danzig's claim that he got sucker punched. He pushed the guy hard for no reason, squared up and tried to defend himself when he got hit. Not the biggest deal in the world, he pushed the wrong guy and got hit hard and went down. Footage can be found at azpunk.com > Speaking of Glenn - you can add him to the "farewell tour" list this summer. On his second annual "Blackest Of The Black" tour (which is his last... RIIIIIGHT) he will be doing a special Misfits set with original guitarist Doyle. Pretty amazing if you think about it. As Glenn said himself, "This is the first time we will be performing on stage together in 20 years. It's the closest thing to a Misfits reunion anyone is ever going to see!" I might just have to go to this show - MIGHT. > The new Queens Of The Stone Age record will have an appearance from the guitarist of ZZ Top. Bad ass > Pete from the Libertines at this moment isn't in the band. His troubles with many drugs brought him to quit the band he fronts in order to go to rehab in Thailand. Pete ended up leaving after three days and no one is sure if he is still a Libertine. Let's hope so. Until I get confirmation I won't be rushing out to see The Libertines tour this fall as a three-piece band. The Libertines without Pete isn't the Libertines to most of us. > Rush played 2 nights at Radio City Music hall, not fair. > Until next issue, be good.

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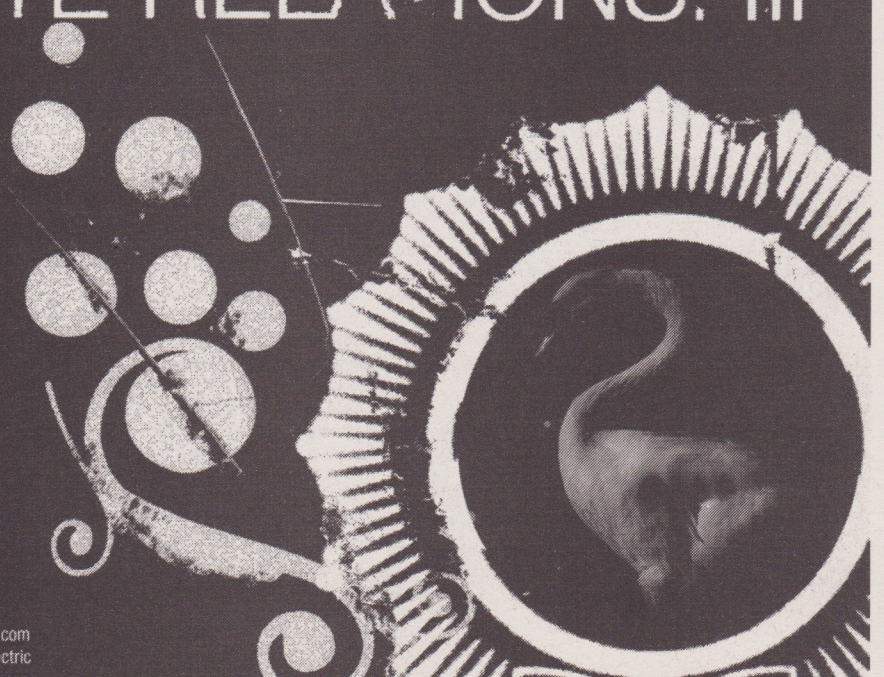
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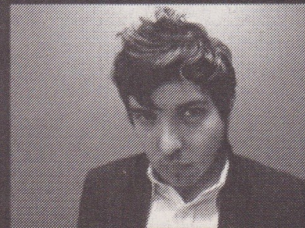
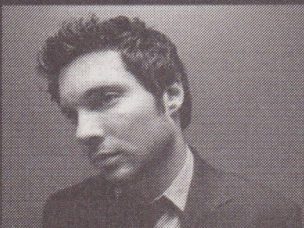
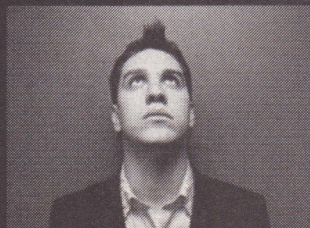
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ISIS

In 1998 the first Isis demo was released. Since that time Isis has released a myriad of innovative albums, inspired splits, and the first in a series of remix CD's on a very diverse and respectable assortment of independent labels. Early alliances with hardcore leaning labels like Second Nature, Escape Artist, and Robotic Empire quickly lead to collaborations with some of the world's most extreme recording companies, Relapse Records. In 2002 Isis proved that they have forged an indelible sound that demands attention well beyond the realms of hardcore and metal with the release of "Oceanic", a thematic and conceptual

triumph, on one of the most artistically adventurous labels in the world- Mike Patton's Ipecac. Isis has since become the prized jewel of the Hydra Head empire, relocated from Boston to California, and begun work on a new album entitled Panopticon. Aaron Turner (vocals/guitar) took some time out from his hectic Hydra Head schedule to answer some questions about Isis's creative process, the evolution of the band, and the current state of the hardcore scene. Special thanks goes out to Hurricane Charley for veering slightly north and not destroying this computer and my subsequent ability to complete this interview.

In Oceanic water is a recurring lyrical theme. In most artistic or literary uses of water imagery, water is associated with life and cleansing but Oceanic takes this symbolism into darker regions.

It's also associated with the creative subconscious - which was one of the many implications I was thinking about when composing the lyrics / content for Oceanic.

In "Carry" water is depicted as a source of violence and death: "And the water takes hold/ Fills his lungs and crushes his body".

Actually it's just portrayed as what it is - a force of nature - in the context of that song it actually represents a sort of refuge or redemption from the painful events the main character has suffered in his life. It may represent death in a way, but also a rebirth in the sense that the protagonist is freed of his current incarnation and able to move into whatever awaits him after the dissolution of his physical body.

Ultimately the protagonist of "Carry" is removed ("the water carries him away") and transfigured by a watery death ("he is light in water"). The references to drowning are less cryptic in "False Light" where the closing lines say "Discover serenity and bliss in drowning". In both instances water brings death but these deaths are described as transcendent releases from the corporeal. How important and intentional are these conceptual lyrical connections to the creation of an Isis album?

Well, they came somewhat after the music. Generally speaking the lyrics are often a result of the music - meaning I derive certain feelings from the music, or it generates visual responses internal, which I then process and construct into some sort of coherent narrative - coherent in my own mind anyway.

Do they serve more as a narrative accent to the story that the music is already telling or do they drive the atmospheric development of the music itself?

It's the music that inspires the lyrics. And not vice versa. Lyrics and the vocalization of them is secondary to the music itself. The music is it's own meaning and the content I attach to it is merely my interpretation of the underlying emotions or subconscious

directives I derive from writing / playing / absorbing it.

Isis is currently working on an upcoming album entitled "Panopticon". I find the mere mention of this title intriguing. The panopticon, a surveillance tower that allows the watchers (the most immediate example is prison guards) to view the watched without being seen, is a frightening symbol of faceless dominance. In the work of cultural theorist Michel Foucault the panopticon comes to represent the most commanding of disciplining and socializing agents: the fear of being caught doing something we shouldn't be doing by an authority that we cannot see. Obviously, the panopticon serves as a powerful and multi-faceted allusion to Orwellian dread, oppression, dehumanization, and post-modern hopelessness. The conceptual possibilities that this title creates are numerous and fascinating. Will the lyrics and mood of Panopticon be tied together by the title or will the album be more thematically eclectic?

As with most Isis records (with the exception of "the red sea" ep), this is a conceptually linear album. Well, perhaps that's overstating it a bit. The narrative isn't totally linear in the sense that there isn't a defined beginning or ending, but all of the contents interrelated and all springs from the same source. Ideally I would love it if the songs were in the order of the narrative that is embedded in them throughout the album, but we never come up with a definite order for the tracks until the album is fully recorded, at which point it's too late to arrange the lyrics for each song in succession. However, because of the way we write songs - with the intention of creating a wholly unified album rather than a bunch of disparate bits, I want the conceptual content to have the same qualities...i.e. that all the lyrics relate to each other some how, for there to be a conscious dynamic to their pace and placement within the songs themselves, and for them to ultimately contribute to the unification of the album as a complete experience.

By taking a listen to your discography it is apparent that musical stagnancy has never been an option for Isis. How does "Panopticon" build upon or further develop the sound of Oceanic?
For as long as we've been composing together

in the group context, it has always been a priority that we satisfy ourselves first and foremost - and what this has meant ultimately is that we've never replicated the same record twice. It's not so much that we MUST not repeat or selves as a self imposed rule, but more that we are just constantly evolving in our own tastes and abilities. So in writing a record we often discuss what elements in our past material has become boring or unnecessary in retrospect and we start from there - in essence we just try to focus on the areas of past compositions that points is into unexplored terrain and use those points as a spring board. whatever recalls older songs is often ditched in favor of things we aren't necessarily comfortable with at first - that's the sign that the music is moving in the right direction. with panopticon I'd say that we're just continuing on the path we've always been on, just following our own trajectory in a sense - there's more atmospheric / textural elements, more balance between dissonance and melody, as well as greater emphasis on the quiet/ subdued sections of our compositions. Another departure in terms of the playing on the new record is that there is less repetition between the guitar parts - they are playing off each other rather than being in unison for long periods of time - overall it's made the songs a little more lush and dense with overlapping layers

Isis song structures are anything but conventional. How does the band's songwriting process work and how has it changed over the years?

Well, I explained a bit of that above...I'd say the major difference is that we've learned to be more comfortable with each other as players - we know what to expect from one another and we're unafraid to bring new ideas to the table. We've also come to be more meticulous about song writing in general - we spend more time hashing out each part and we spend more attention devoted to the details of the songs: samples, loops, keyboards, etc - we're not so devoted to the idea of delivering punishing riffs. Though those things certainly have their place in our palette it is not the defining characteristic of our sound anymore.

The cinematic quality of Isis songs makes them perfect for reinterpretation. The remixes of songs from Oceanic are provided by a very diverse company of artists. How did the idea for "Oceanic Remixes Vol.1" come about. How were potential remixing artists determined and can we expect more remixes in the future?

Well, we'd always relished the idea of collaboration and had dabbled in it - both in the studio and on

stage, but we wanted to extend that idea further. To stretch our music into another realm as well as providing ourselves with an opportunity to collaborate with artists we admired but otherwise would have little chance of interacting with. Initially the idea was proposed as music to accompany a DVD to coincide with the release of "Oceanic", but sadly that never came to fruition for a host of reasons. As time went on we decided that we would pursue the aural end of the idea anyway and we began collecting names amongst ourselves as to who we'd like to involve in the project - a potential wish list as it were. And much to our surprise most of the people we were interested in working with were already familiar with Isis or became interested in us after having been sent some of our recordings. As far as why we picked the people we did, it all boils down to our personal tastes coupled with a desire to work with people that wouldn't totally undermine our original aesthetic. And while many of the tracks are quite different from the original pieces I don't think any of them would be out of context for the musical world we inhabit.

With Isis and HydraHead both being birthed in Boston how has the label's relocation to California affected the band? Have there been any difficulties in acclimating to the West Coast scene?

We established ourselves enough before leaving the East Coast that the move didn't really effect us all that much. We'd played in California numerous times before - the only difference was the fact that we had much shorter drives to get here. And while this move has garnered mixed responses with in the band I think overall that it's been a positive step for us. and we sure as hell didn't want to remain in Boston for a slew of reasons, so despite whatever problems we may have / had out here it wouldn't have been any better in Boston - at least that's my perception. I can't say that we would have written exactly the

same album had we been in Boston during it's completion, but really think any differences would have been minimal and coincidental at most.

Since the move has Isis played with any bands that have caught your eye as exceptional or worthy of attention?

None that we wouldn't have come into contact with anyway. I think for the most part we're pretty in touch with the music scene at large (though not with every facet of it to be sure), and a couple members of the band, myself included, are constantly seeking out new sounds - both from our immediate environs as well as all over the globe. So the short answer is no.. But perhaps I'm just not thinking of bands that may have slipped my mind - but beyond that we haven't done a whole lot playing out since we've been here - most of our time was devoted to completing the new album.

Isis has always stood apart from the hardcore scene, by being more artistically experimental than most, though still being largely linked to it especially the Boston hardcore scene. How much of a mark did the hey-days of Boston era HydraHead, when bands like Cave In, Botch, and Converge were redefining hardcore, leave on Isis?

That's really hard to say. I mean those were formative times for us, and our links to those bands and that scene have certainly played an integral role in our history, but musically speaking those bands had little to do with our sound and it's development. Cave In is the band of those 3 mentioned that has had the most influence on me personally, and our tour with them in 1999 is a big milestone on our path, but I can't really venture to guess what would have happened to us and how we would have developed had we began our "career" somewhere else. I think in terms of being part of a network that provided us with

an outlet for our recordings and performances and allowed us to circulate on the "live circuit", that being a part of that boston family was crucial to our development - or at the very least in our rise in public stature. We couldn't have gotten where we are with out the associations with Hydra Head, our tour with Cave In, and all that other stuff - but still I firmly believe that the group of people that comprises Isis would have eventually come to the same musical conclusions that we have, which when it comes down to it is the most important part of our existence.

What do you think of the hardcore scene today and do you still see Isis as a part of it?

Well, hardcore is at a commercial peak in terms of it's popularity and is much the worse for it I think. The term these days is so vague however that it's hard to know if it's even appropriate to apply it to a band like Isis or on the opposite end of the spectrum a band like Thursday or Atreyu - especially in the case of the latter I don't even want to be remotely associated with that type of music and perhaps they would feel the same. Isis was born from the hardcore scene undeniably, but for some people in the band that was NEVER an influence, and in terms of what we do now even less so. We have pulled in so may influences from waaaaay outside the hardcore scene that I'd say there are only remnants of that genre that are identifiable in our current sound. That's not to say we shun the hardcore background from which we come or that we're making efforts to disassociate ourselves from it - but let's face it - hardcore is a fairly limited realm in terms of the bands that define the genre and there are so many other interesting types of music out there it would be silly for any band interested in musical progression to limit themselves to that framework. I have a deep love for some of the hardcore bands of old, as well as a few current ones, but it is NOT the only type of music I'm interested in and never has been - and I'm sure I speak for all the people in Isis when I say that. - Interview: Jon Glover / Photos: Greg Moss

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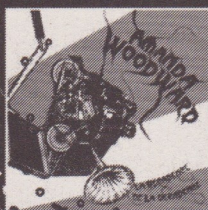


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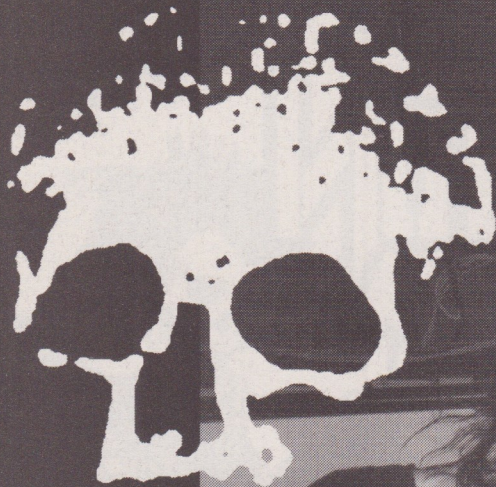
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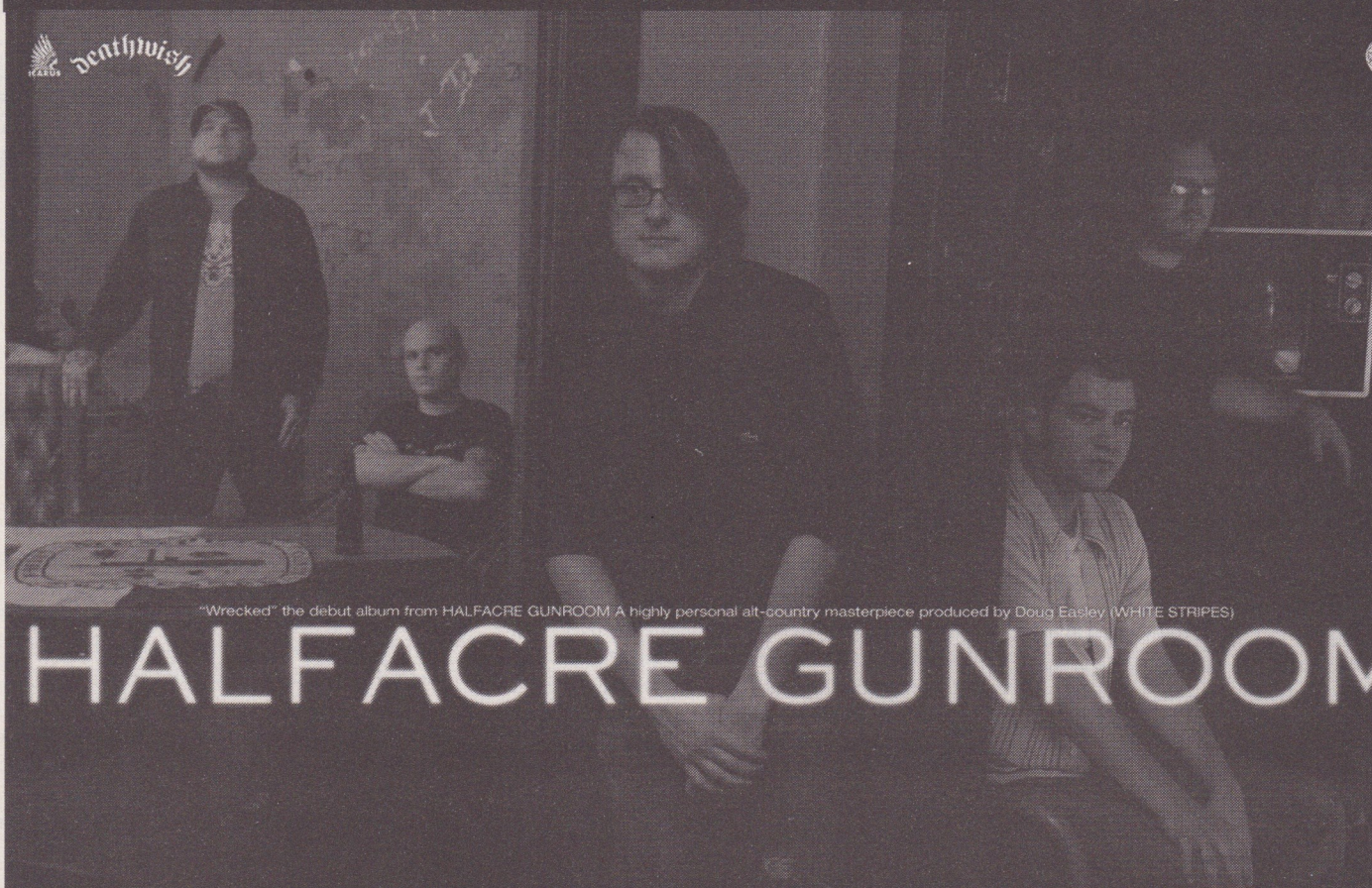
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JOHN FRUSCIANTE

To my ear, John Frusciante is responsible for many of the best aspects of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' music -- the aching guitar parts on "Under the Bridge" and "By the Way," the bittersweet and immediately nostalgic feelings that underscore the melody on "Scar Tissue" and manage to evoke Los Angeles better than just about anything else, the harmonies that have made a bigger appearance on the last two records.

But John is also responsible for a

challenging and extensive solo catalog. He seems to really have found his stride with his current and ambitious project -- releasing one solo record a month for six months. The first, "The Will To Death," with longtime collaborator Josh Klinghoffer, is a brilliant and moody album that looks to 70s rock as much as it does to Eno-worthy experimentation and Frusciante's own, now trademarked, spacious guitar sound - which draws as much from the subtleties of Cat Stevens as it does from the aggressive punch of the Germs.

The second in the series -- released under the band name Ataxia -- unites John and Josh with

Fugazi's Joe Lally to make for a stunning, broad and immediate record that sounds like Fugazi playing with the same ideas as early PIL.

John Frusciante is a true virtuoso, a onetime songwriting wiz kid who first emerged with the Chili Peppers as a teenage guitar genius. He had well-documented struggles with drugs in the past, but the now clean musician is in the midst of the most musically productive period of his life thus far.

I met John at a bench on Mulholland Drive. Up above Hollywood, we sat and talked about the impact that music has as well as John's insights into making amazing music. John truly loves music and he was able





to put into words better than anyone I've ever interviewed, why I love music.

What's your earliest memory of music?

My earliest memory of music - I was hearing classical music all throughout my youth because my dad was a pianist. So I think I was hearing lots of music all the time in the household, but the first thing I remember is being four years old and being in the neighbors house and hearing the song "Morning Has Broken" in a dimly lit room at night time. And it's funny that you asked me that because I was learning it on the piano this morning. I'm almost finished learning the whole piano part for that song, so I was working on it this morning and then I came to this interview and that's the first thing you asked me.

That song is it. I think there is some kind of connection, emotionally with his music that I felt as a little kid that seems just as strong in me now. Sometimes I feel like things that end up having something to do with your own musical voice when you're older, when people hear them as little kids, the way I see time, I don't believe that Cat Stevens stuck out to me and then that led me to make music that I've made that has something to do with that. To me, the fact that I've made music that has something to do with is the reason why it struck me as hard as it did when I was a kid. I feel the same way about Jimmy Page hearing James Burton and Elvis Presley, or whatever. I feel like all the music that will ever be made has already been made and I feel like everything that is ever going to happen has already happened. So, I feel like the things that influence other things make other things happen, they're all... Things happen just as often because something is going to happen as much as because things already happened.

Was that something that brought pop elements into your songwriting?

I dunno, it's just a feeling, ya know? The connection that I feel I guess with his music with myself is that primarily when I write songs, it's on acoustic guitar. But at the same time, you wouldn't really call them folk songs and you wouldn't give them any name that would have anything to do with any acoustic music genre or anything. And I think his music is that way as well. They're just songs, they're not any particular style of songs, they're just songs. And I feel like the songs I write, that's basically true of as well. That's the connection I feel.

When did you first start listening to experimental music? Was Brian Eno the first?

Let's see... [long pause] I could be forgetting something, but... Well, when I first heard Brian Eno, I wasn't really aware of it being Brian Eno. I was hearing him in the context of being the producer of "Remain In Light" and the producer of "More Songs About Buildings and Food." So I was hearing his music but not having any understanding of what his role in the music was or anything like that. But that music had a big effect on me at that age, as well as the first Devo album, which he produced also. There was definitely a period of time when that was my favorite album. When I was like nine years old Devo was my favorite band.

Did it seem like out-there music to you?

Nothing ever seemed out-there to me. When I was a little kid I found "Fragile" by Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer's trilogy album in my Dad's record collection. I took these records, and I was digesting this stuff which I later found out is called progressive rock, but at the time that I was first hearing it when I was seven years old, it just sounded like beautiful music to me.

It probably has to do with the fact that I grew up with so much classical music around the house that nothing really sounded weird to me ever. I'm a person that the first time I heard "Trout Mask Replica" by Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, it just sounded like beautiful, great music to me. It didn't take me awhile to get used to it or something. Of course, the music gave me new things the more I listened to it, because that's in the nature of that music, but I've never been a person who music didn't sound good the first time I heard it, like it was too weird. I've always had a nice time with things that people consider weird.

Where did this question start again? Oh, Eno - I guess when I was about 13 was when I brought the "Discreet Music" album by Brian Eno, and not only the liner notes on that album, but getting my hands on interviews with him really made a big difference in terms of me starting to come up with a more artistic way of approaching my life. It inspired me to write in notebooks a lot and inspired me to start wanting to expand my mind and learn about visual art and things like that and probably just made me in general want to work at making more interesting music and work with experimenting more and things like that. So I think when I got my first four track

when I was fourteen, a lot of the stuff I was doing, it was very artsy and very influenced by people like him and David Byrne and Laurie Anderson. That was my favorite stuff when I first started recording music and I think it still continues to be as inspiring to me nowadays.

I'm definitely somebody who believes more in hearing ideas. I believe more in the idea than I do in raw emotion or something like that. For me, having a good idea is the most important thing. And I don't really like basic music, or basic rock music or things like that. For me, there has to be something stimulating about something on an intellectual level as well as how we feel it. Because I like music to stretch my mind out to make me see things that I would never see a certain way or feel things that I would never feel.

In your approach to music are you more interested in sounds or arrangements?

Well, one thing I've been interested in lately is the resulting sound of a structure. Where you're not really thinking so much in terms of one particular instrument sticking out or what am I going to add to what's already there, but more in terms of the overall sound. Two people standing in a room and singing together sound different than recording both of those voices separately. In my recordings we really try to keep it as live as possible. On the Ataxia stuff, the music - the bass, the guitar, the drums and the vocals - were all being recorded at the same time. On the Ataxia record things still seem to be recorded in too much of a separate way. On the album that followed that we started leaving all the doors open and letting lots of bleed happen and things like that. My recordings since then have had a much more...the sounds are all mixing with each other. That's what your question reminds me of. As the recordings have gone on, and certainly the records that will be coming out in October and November and December, all of the instruments combined have one sound to them. They all combine to make one sound. Whereas on "The Will To Death" and on the Ataxia one, I still feel like the instruments still sound like they are in separate rooms in most cases. The records have become more and more one texture, one sound - all of the instruments combining to make one thing. That's what I'm shooting for. I'm interested in finding ways of exploring the sonic possibilities that one can have with a guitar and with a drum set and with a synthesizer and all of these things. I'm interested in exploring that with as organic of a set-up as possible and to use the air and to use the natural things that happen with air molecules and sound, making those things mix up to the point where things are happening

that are as interesting to me as, say, completely synthetic music or computer music would be, but something that I'm doing organically with the air. It seems a lot more infinite to me. There's really nothing that can be compared with the role that the air plays in all of this stuff.

What do you think of electronic musicians that have a more organic sound like on the Mego label - Fennesz for example?

I definitely had a period of time where I was listening to a lot of electronic music from the 70s and 80s and it's of no interest to me at the moment mainly because - and I was very obsessed with it, so I don't say this to slack it off or anything like that - but I don't like the straight up and down-ness of it, you know what I mean? I don't like the fact that everything fits evenly into 32nd notes or things like that. I just don't like the straightness of it. At the moment, what really appeals to me is the unevenness and the jerkiness and the randomness and all that of people like Pita and Fennesz and people like that. Their music doesn't sound like robot music to me, ya know, it sounds very human.

I was just listening to the Fennesz album "Endless Summer".

Yeah, it's incredible, it's a great record.

Do you think that being someone who has a brilliant mind for music, do you process sound differently?

Well I think everyone processes music differently. Our subconscious and our memories which stay in our subconscious - any music we hear, as well as anything we even experience or see, triggers things in that memory and triggers things in that subconscious. The result of the mixing up of our subconscious that listening to music does is just that we feel a certain way. We don't experience a series of memories as we listen to music because consciously we are focused on the music, but those memories conspire to make us feel a certain way in our conscious brain. Certain music triggers different things because the music symbolizes traumas in life, the music symbolizes happy moments in life, the music symbolizes feelings of triumph, the music symbolizes feelings of failure, the music symbolizes feelings of peace. And depending on how comfortable or uncomfortable we are with these various things that the music stimulates inside of us, we feel different ways according to different music.

I know for instance that out of everybody I know, I don't know a lot of people that listen to the extreme variety of music that I listen to. It seems like, in general, people to me seem sort of close minded when it comes to music. They seem stuck in their ways or something. I feel like maybe if you took me ten years ago and me now, all of the music that I've opened my mind to that I didn't originally like but that I've learned to like, or that I've gradually opened those parts of my brain up to - I don't see people doing that quite as much.

In general, I think especially once someone reaches a certain age like 30 years of age, they're gonna still be liking the same shit when they're 50. People at a certain point, they stop exploring and they just stick to the things that they like. I know people who are really smart people in music, people who really know a lot about music and people who are really knowledgeable on the history of music and they're really good with telling you what band did what song. But their opinions about music haven't changed since 1975. They don't like anything that they didn't like then. And the only things that they like that have been done since then are things that have some relationship to the music of the 60s and the music of the 50s. I'm not one of those people, but I think it tells you something psychologically about the listener more than it has anything to do with the music. I think certain music symbolizes things and takes people's brains into places where they don't want their brains to go. Or it brings up things in their heads that to open themselves up to the music, they'd have to open themselves up psychologically to something that they don't want to open themselves up to.

But I believe that if I'm sitting there listening to something like the Velvet Underground - which to my head is one of the main things that makes me feel the best or T.Rex is something that makes me feel the best - I don't understand why it is that T.Rex makes me feel so much better than...what would be something else? I don't wanna put something down that I like... Okay - Led Zeppelin. I love Led Zeppelin, they're one of my favorite bands, but sitting there listening to T.Rex fulfills me in some kind of way that I can't explain. It's not as revolutionary music as Led Zeppelin and it's not as far reaching, it's much more one dimensional. But to me, it makes me feel as good as music can make me feel.

There's just something about some music that makes you feel so good. I believe that it just puts

your subconscious in order, it straightens things up. For me, that's the beautiful thing about music. Life just fucks us up - everyday we get fucked up in different ways, everyday of our life since we've been little kids, so much shit happens to us that is undesirable and we see so many things that just confuse us and make things worse. Yet all those undesirable things that have happened to us, music takes all of them and makes us realize that they are all supposed to be exactly how they are because all those bad things that happen to us are what make us feel as good as we feel from the music that we really love. The music that we really love puts all the bad things that have happened to us in order in our head and makes them make sense and makes it good that they happened the way that they did.

When I was ten years-old the Germs did that for me. All of a sudden, all these angry feelings that I had inside me and rage that I didn't know what to do with - all of a sudden I was glad that I had those feelings because it connected me with this beautiful music and turned anything that I saw as being negative about the world or about my life, it turned it all into a positive.

I don't think it's so much that sound audibly sounds different, I think it's just that our brains just have a different way of processing. We all process it differently because each one of us has a different life, has a different memory... For some people, the healthiest thing we can do for our brains is to constantly try to expand our understanding of music and constantly try to get into things that we weren't into before and constantly try to find out about things that are new. And for others of us, the thing that makes us feel the best is to stay listening to the same things that we listened to when we were seven years old.

Sometimes both.

Yeah, I mean, that's how I am. I still love the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack as much as I did when I was eight years old. It doesn't change. If I ever loved a music, I still love. Any song that I've ever loved, I still love it.

Did you consciously plan to release so many albums - six in six months?

I definitely didn't plan it. At the time that we started recording "Will To Death," Josh and I were trying to record quickly but we didn't know for sure if we could it. We didn't know if recording a record in five days was something that was in the cards for us. We had previously figured out that we had been kinda intimidated by the studio and it had been a little more of a struggle to make the "Shadows" record. So, we

realized very quickly that we were able to record really quickly just by doing things our own way. Instead of putting 25 microphones on the drums, you put three microphones up and you just don't fuck around. You just get in there and you record like men. And we pulled it off.

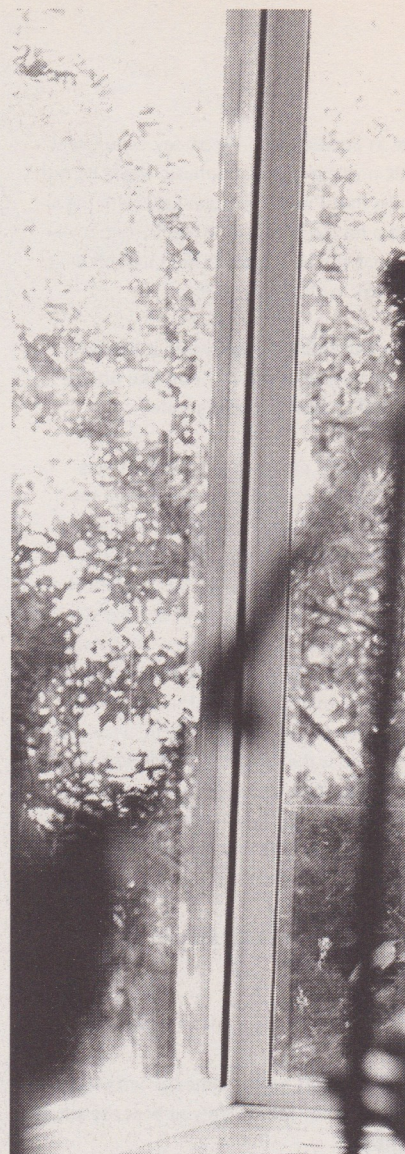
So once we realized we could do it, it seemed pretty reasonable. I would make a little CD of some songs and give it to Josh. Josh would make up drum parts to the songs, we'd get together and rehearse a few times, get the drums and the guitar and the vocals all perfect and then go into the studio and just record it. It was a pretty good system. That's not the way it was for each album, but that's how it was for "The Will To Death" and "Inside of Emptiness."

You know, I had a sixth month break. I had come home from touring and I made a list of about 70 songs that I had written in the last three years because my songwriting had definitely taken a step up about three years ago. There's good songs from before then too, but there not as on top on the list in terms of the ones I'm really anxious to record. Of the ones I wrote in the last three years, I felt like that at the end of this six months I'd really like to try to have a good portion of these songs recorded. And it's worked out that way, I've recorded a lot of my favorite ones and there's still definitely at least one albums worth of songs that I still consider to be some of the best ones that I still have to record in the future. But I'm really proud of what we did in that period of time. Especially the last three albums that I did, I really feel like I've gotten to a good point with the whole thing of recording music. It feels good. "Will To Death" feels like it's the start of it. It definitely starts peaking after the first three releases.

How has your attitude towards perfection changed?



I really enjoy mistakes. When I listen to music at home, if I hear a little moment in a song where the drums and the guitar don't exactly line up perfectly next to each other, or the drums speed up a little to much on a fill, or the singer's voice cracks, or somebody yells in the background - anything that breaks up the straightness of it, those things excite me, those things make that music fun to listen to over and over. Somehow those things are endearing to me. There was a time, at the time of "Shadows Collide With People," I was really wanting to make things perfect to the point where I think I took away a certain amount of the natural personality of what Josh and I have to offer. Josh and me, to my tastes, I could listen to our



flaws all day long. I could listen to a record of us really exposing the deepest parts of ourselves or the weakest parts of ourselves, or whatever you want to call it. To my ear, that's a wonderful sound.

I guess it was just something I had to go through at the time of "Shadows." Maybe the fact that we are as swift and efficient now with the recording has to do with that we did that really slow recording like that. Sometimes you have to go to one extreme to be able to go to another. I appreciate that album and I'd be curious what we'd do now if we tried to take our time a little more than we do now - say spend ten days making a record instead of five



days. The collaboration album that we did has got a lot of electronics and things like that, so it took a couple days longer - it took about eight days - but it's still with this way of approaching things that we have now. It's still much more raw and organic feeling. It still sounds much more human. I'm interested in what we would do on one of my solo records if we take our time a little more.

In general, I feel like the fact that people do things that they don't intend on doing is a big part of where good music comes from. A lot of the time a good song comes from going to the wrong chord. A lot of the time you just shout out anything while you're singing something and what comes out is something that was completely

unintentional but it leads you to being able to make the melody for the song.

It's important to me for it to be real. Definitely at the time of making these records, I was feeling very strongly that I wanted it to really sound like the natural things that happened while we were playing. That was more important to me than any sort of preconceived idea of what the song was supposed to sound like. I like to hear what actually happened in the room and I like to get a feeling that it's actually people playing in a room and not people who have put everything under a microscope to the point where they're just getting everything perfect. It's just not as exciting for me to listen to. I think my favorite way to hear

bands is BBC sessions and things like that. That's often my favorite way to hear an artist - to hear them either on their demos or rehearsals or BBC sessions or live. I like to hear people in their purest form.

And we get to hear the process.

Yeah, that's true. And that's kinda the interesting thing for me now when I'm looking in the future and thinking about what would it be like now if I recorded a more produced album but with everything I've learned from these six albums recently. And that's what I like about it - that sort of layering where you have your original tape where you just wrote the song, and then you have one

version that you recorded of it at home on a four track where you came up with a couple overdub ideas, and then somebody else heard it and they had an idea for a drum part to go with that, and then you recorded another version of the song. It's interesting when a band records multiple versions of a song before they finally get to the one. The final one ends up being a conglomeration of all of these other ones that have happened and somehow it's deeper and somehow it's denser.

I'm interested to see if we can do anything like that to make the recording of some of my songs meatier and at the same time you would always have that first take feeling. Never any of the recordings would be something that would be labored over. It all would be done quick, but it would still be a process of the song going through different phases. Because I've always had good experiences with making demos. On "Shadows" we had demos and the recording just pretty much followed the demos, and I think that's not the way I'd want to do it. I'd be more interested in trying to do recordings that were each completely different from one another. And maybe you retain one aspect of one particular one, but the intention is to approach it differently each time and not to just do one good demo and then do a duplication of that demo. I guess that it would be going into each recording with the idea that I'm not trying to do the perfect version of this song right here, I'm just doing a version of the song. Every version is a version and maybe when you do the last one you just try to combine the best things about the different versions - to bring in elements that are in each one. And that would be the point of doing it that way, to always be something that was done quick and never something that was too thought over.

There's definitely music that I like listening to that people put a lot of time into but at the same time I think the stuff I really get a charge out of, even when it's very produced music, is when you know that the singer just went in there and just did it very quickly and you can just feel that there's a certain live element to it. That it's not something that's being perfected in the studio by a computer, but it's really how that person sounds.

What does "The Will To Death" mean?

I can't talk about it. You're the first person who asked, though. [laughs] To my way of thinking, it's pretty crazy that I even put it

as the title for a record. It's been something that's been inside me for a long time and it's not something that I'm at liberty to talk about.

I understand.

I'm kinda hoping somebody's gonna come along who knows what it means so I can have some kind of connection with them on that one.

Is it possible for someone else to know what it means?

Yeah. But it's not in a book or anything like. They'd have to know it psychically.

There are aspects of that album that sound very spacious. Are the spaces in music as important to you as the notes?

Yeah, I feel like in a lot of ways - I was just saying yesterday to somebody - I think guitar players have done a lot of exploring of the different ways of filling up space. People have gone really at length to figure out new ways of playing fast and new ways of putting as many notes into a space as possible. But not that many do that much experimentation with space. Somebody like Hank Marvin in the 60s did a lot of interesting things with space, or Duane Eddy. And definitely a certain amount of the new wave guitarist players in the 70s did interesting things with it. But in general, people don't really think that highly of it, like guitar magazines, they don't really care about my guitar playing. I think it has more to do with that the most innovative things that I've done have to do with space, they don't have to do with ways that I've been filling up holes. They have to do with the holes that I create. That's what I think is interesting in terms of things I've done. Definitely after the record "Shadows" where it was all about having lots of overdubs all over the place, with "Will To Death" I wanted to have a stripped down record. I was listening a lot to the Velvet Underground "Loaded" outtakes where they were in the recording studio for "Loaded" but it's not the versions. That stuff is really exciting to me.

I wanted ["The Will To Death"] to have a sort of unfinished feeling to it. Something like "Days Have Turned" where it's just drums and guitar and vocal. To me, it sounds very complete like that. And the reason why is because there's that fourth element - there's the vocal and the drums and the guitar - but then there's what those three things do to each other and the way that those three things battle with the air and fight for the same piece of tape. They create another sound

altogether. For me, it's the space, it's the air in the room, it's the atmosphere. Something like the song "The Will To Death," the atmosphere in the room is an integral part. It's working with the guitar and the drums and the bass as much as those instruments are working with each other.

I'm definitely very interested in what I can do with space. For me, teaching people lessons about space with music is what I feel like is one of my purposes here on the planet.

I think there's another life where I am a big wall of outer space. So I think that it has something to do with why my music has so much to do with space.

What was your recording approach with the Ataxia album?

We knew what we were going to do in general, but the arrangements were sort of made up as we were doing it. Since I was doing the vocals live, we didn't have it planned out like okay, I'm gonna sing three verses and then I'm gonna do a chorus and then I'll do that other section and then I'll do two more verses. We didn't have any plans like that. But in every song, Joe plays the same bass line from beginning to end, Josh follows the dynamics of the vocals or the dynamics of the vocals follow what Josh plays on the drums. I had a variety of different guitar parts that I'd do for each song and I'd just do them whenever I felt like it. The songs started out as improvisation as do Red Hot Chili Peppers songs also start out as improvisations, but once I wrote vocals to the songs, the improvisations became songs. And the arrangements of those songs were improvised, but they didn't fluctuate that much from performance to performance. When we played those songs live, they might have been a little longer or something like that, but it was the same basic idea.

We have a clear concept of where the song is going and how it's gonna end. But, obviously all of the soloing and all of the drum fills and all that kind of stuff, that's all being improvised. It definitely felt like we were creating something in the studio when we were doing it. And the fact that we didn't have an exact arrangement, but that the arrangement had more to do with just Josh listening to my vocals and following where I was taking the song as I was singing it, that's what was really exciting about it. Say, for instance, when we were performing the last song on the album - "Montreal" - there was no vocal being done because Joe sang it, so he overdubbed his vocals. But it's like a 13 minute song and as

we were recording, I played the guitar all the way up to the ten minute point, at that point I just pulled the cord out of my guitar and plugged it into the synthesizer and did my synthesizer solo. So it's all being done just live, and the feeling that it didn't just fall apart. The feeling that we were like 11 minutes into it and nothing bad's happened yet and we're still fucking doing it. And it was that way for all the songs. We'd be like eight minutes into a song and I'd think, "goddamn Josh just never lets up." He's just right there. It's very exciting.

Even when you do have a song's arrangement planned out, it's still exciting when you get near the end of the song. But in the case of these, it almost seemed like superhuman or something. Because it's so easy for it to fall apart. It's so easy if we're not all thinking the same way, if our brains aren't all connected in a perfect way. Especially, not being a band that plays together all the time, it's like we really have to focus on that group consciousness. And when you've made it to the end of the song it just seems almost like a miracle or something because it doesn't seem like anything that any one of you controlled and it seems like it would be so easy for it to just fuck up. It's really fun for me to delve that deep inside myself to really just pull out that amount of energy that carries us all through a song. It's a great feeling.

Is the songwriting process different for you solo songs and Red Hot Chili Peppers songs?

I don't usually start thinking about stuff being for the Chili Peppers until it's time to write for the Chili Peppers. When we started the "By The Way" tour two years ago, if I wrote any music it was gonna turn into a song for me. If I start playing some chords that sound good to me, I'm gonna start singing over it and it's gonna become one of my songs. Whereas right now, the Chili Peppers are gonna start writing a new record in August, so if I come up with something, the moment I come up with it, if it sounds like that would be good for the Chili Peppers, if I think that's something that I think Anthony would like to sing over, then I'll just hang onto and use it for them. At the same time, I have my own course to follow as a songwriter myself, and since I don't write lyrics in the Chili Peppers, if a song comes to me and it seems like something I'm inspired to write lyrics and sing over, I'm gonna write a song for myself. That's basically the difference, that my songs are songs that I write lyrics to and Chili Peppers songs are songs that are more just a guitar part that Anthony's gonna write the lyrics to and that Flea's gonna write a bass line to. Things that I write for the Chili Peppers, in general, have a lot more space to them whereas the stuff that I write for myself, I see where it's going all the way to the end even when I first write the song. Whereas a Chili Peppers song, I don't have any idea where it's going. In general, the band writes a song together.

What's the most important factor to you when you're writing music? Is it to be uncompromising or original or is it to take the vibes that you're feeling for the song and make them real in the world?

That's probably the biggest part of it. Being original has never really been something that I'm interested in trying to consciously do. Being original is something that just sort of happened to me at one time. There are those people who they try to be original and they are original, that's just the way that their psychology is set up inside. But for me, I just really love other musicians and other music so much, the fact that I have the energetic impetus to keep creating music and keep recording music is because I'm so excited about the music that I'm listening to.

As far as the being original thing, it's something that...I guess when I was 19 years old I still felt like I was very derivative of other things that I was listening to and I didn't really have my own place in the world of music. Then when I was 20 I just started doing all this stuff that it seemed like I never heard anything like it before. I started creating music that, while I could tell it was inspired by the stuff I was listening to, it didn't sound like the stuff that I was listening to. And I just consider myself very lucky for that and blessed. But, I also can still relate to when I was 16 years old, and there was another kid at high school, a bass player, who would tell me like, "who cares what Frank Zappa says, you shouldn't be just like Frank Zappa, you're John Frusciante, you're better than Frank Zappa!" and stuff like that. I'd say, "what are you talking about? Frank Zappa is the greatest in the world and I'm just loving the greatest person who ever existed." I loved him so much, I agreed with Frank Zappa on everything. That was the fun of being a teenage for me. It's fun to really have a deep love for something. I just though, when I looked at that guy I thought, "you just don't have the capacity to really love somebody." I really loved these people, ya know?

In retrospect, it's like, I see where he was coming from. You don't wanna listen to somebody who's just a clone of somebody else, you wanna listen to somebody's who's original. But for me, I still feel like the fundamental, important part of it all is to be excited about other people's music. Because if I didn't have that -- I wouldn't expect to be able to make good music just being only driven by me, me and my own songs. Wake up, listen to my own songs, think about which one I'm gonna work on. It just would never happen. For me, the whole thing is the excitement that I get from other music.

But when I do write a song, there's a feeling attached to it and a feeling that runs through it, that in the recording process, all I'm doing is following that feeling or that vibe, as you put it. There's a certain feeling attached to the song that the song carries with it, and

all I try to do with the recording is just flesh that out. I hear very clearly that some instrument needs to come in at the beginning of the second verse before the vocal comes in. And as I listen to it, a sound just appears in my head and that's what I go after. Whether I need to make that sound on a guitar or whether I need to make it with the synthesizer or whether Josh needs to make up something and that I'm going to stay out of it, or whatever it is. But everything still has to make some kind of connection with that feeling that the song carries with it. At that point, once the song is written, the song is the boss and that's what tells me what to do. In a lot of ways, the things that I choose to do over that song might be influenced by what I'm listening to. Like for instance on "The Will To Death," I think the night before I did all those swooshy sounds on the song "The Mirror," I was listening to the song "Drugs" by the Talking Heads like ten times in a row. Eno's just doing all these cool noise sounds that are all coming from different places. It's actually not as extreme as what I do on "The Mirror." Oh and I was also listening to something that he does on the Nico album "The End." And I think it's "No One Is There" maybe, and there are also a lot of noise sounds and you don't know where one is gonna come from next.

Or "The Innocent and Vain" has those crazy, sharp sounds.

Oh yeah -- it is the one you're talking about, because at the end it goes screamy but throughout the song it's more subdued. So, yeah, I was listening to that and I was listening to "Drugs." So I think when I came up with the idea of doing the things the way I did it on "The Mirror," it was definitely inspired by the fact that I was listening to those things I was listening to the night before, but at the same time it still seemed like the song was telling me where to put them and how to approach them and exactly how to dial the sound in just write. That was all being done by the recording I had made of the song "The Mirror." It's not like I'm thinking of Eno anymore, I'm thinking about what's the best thing to do for the song.

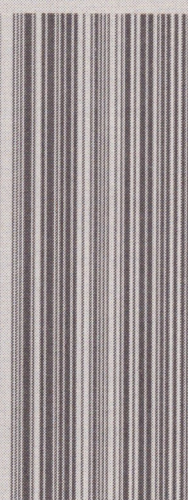
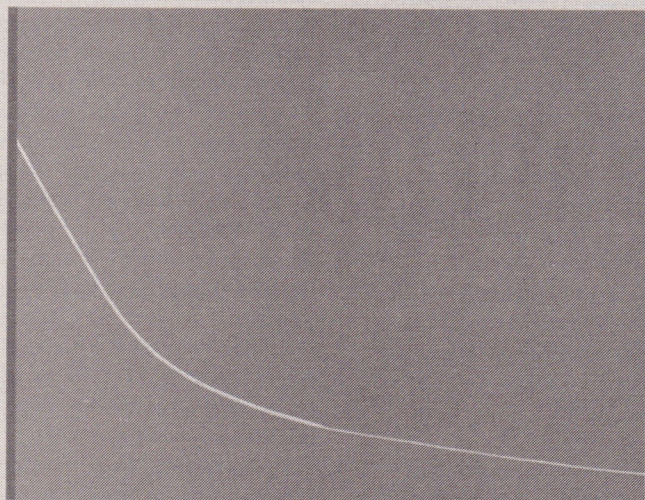
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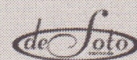


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MATT RUBIN & THE PAPER BRIGADE

Matt Rubin's Paper Brigade (PaperBrigade.com) is a website that operates as a photo gallery, exhibiting the work of some of the most striking up-and-coming photographers working today. From Ye Rin Mok's "awkward silent moments" to Bryan Sheffield's band photography, Claire and Jeremy Weiss' snapshot portraiture of punk culture and Aaron Farley's saturated glamour images, there's a unifying characteristic to this work. It all subverts pretension for immediacy, disregards contrivances in exchange for capturing subjects' emotion and, like Ryan McGinley, concentrates on community. Dan Monick's cohesive collection helps define the site as

a true online gallery, because his photos boldly offer a sense of the camera being in the right place at the right time. And let's not forget Matt Rubin's own photography, which represents the punk rock subculture with bright, lively portraits of friends and a genuine, realistic warmth instead of the false, posed aggression and bleakness that all too frequently finds its way into the pages of rock mags.

First of all, can you explain what paperbrigade is, and how you got the idea to start it?

Well right now The Paper Brigade is just a message board community and place we post

links to websites we like. The Paper Brigade did start as a record label. I put out a few records and then was done with that. On the last record I released I did all the photos for it and I was getting really into photography so after I stopped doing the records, I put up my photo portfolio on Paper Brigade. So it was just me and I really wanted to put my efforts - instead of doing records - into a book. So I contacted photographers to be in it. And as the story goes it never came out after I got a lot of amazing photos from Jeremy Weiss, Aaron Farley, Chrissy Piper, and a few others. So I decided to take some of the photos I got from that and featured them on the site with my stuff. And that's what started it all.

Is there a defining characteristic, ideology or style that unites artists on Paper Brigade?

I don't know. I think when people come to the site they know it will have something to do with music in some way. Lots of portraits. It got a little too oriented towards band live photography so I really wanted to put an end to that. I love portraits, I could see a million and still love them. As long as they were interesting of course.

How would you describe your photographic work? What is your process like and what inspires you?

Well lately, well since I moved to LA, I don't know what it is, I haven't been shooting enough, but I will soon go forth again and shoot photos. I guess my work is pictures of my friends. There's nothing more to it. When I first started, it was a lot of pictures of my friend Kurt. I don't know if he got sick of it, if he did, he never said anything. I'd just take pictures of whoever was around at the time. I was lucky to get some pretty interesting friends. In Boston I did a lot of using photography to meet new people. I did projects where I could only take a picture of someone I didn't really know personally but knew through the music they played or met through a friend.

I'd call up musicians and see if I could take their pictures for school. Everytime they said yes and everytime I showed up at their home it was a different situation, a great conversation. I love that having a camera sort of gives you access to anything. I think when I get to travel or I know lots of people will be around - maybe like a BBQ - is when I love to take pictures. I can't really plan to take a picture it just has to happen.

What photographers have influenced you the most?

That's a tough question. I don't know anyone's names. I know that lots of them have. I can't really name too many famous people that have. I love the work by Andy Mueller, Jeremy Weiss, Claire Weiss, Bryan Sheffield, Aaron Farley, Chrissy Piper, Dan Monick, just a lot of the friends that I got to know over the years.

I know you've had some cool photography gigs with bands and labels. Can you talk about for-hire work you've done and how it compares to your own photography projects?


I don't do a lot of for hire work. I get it every once and awhile. I assist as well. I've got to shoot Sean Na Na, that was fun, he had a great

mustache. My Roommate designed the new Bad Religion cover and let me shoot the photo for that. Just done random stuff here and there. Definitely not my main source of income. I also work at a record label during the days.

Who are your current favorite artists on paperbrigade and why?

Well I really love the Dan Monick feature. It is the most recent. It was the first time I decided what I wanted to do with the site and will continue to do. Usually the features are just "featured work" and that's great, I think some of the photographers by showing a lot of their work got jobs through it which is amazing. But now I'd love to take it in a direction of almost like a gallery showing. How you work on a body of work to show in a gallery, it's usually a cohesive body of work. So that's what I love. So look for more of that on the site. Ye Rin Mok's stuff is great. I see her name everywhere these days. So that's awesome to have her on there. I don't know...I like a lot of them in their own ways that's why I wanted them to be apart of it.

Interview By Charles Spano / Photo by Jeremy Michael Weiss.




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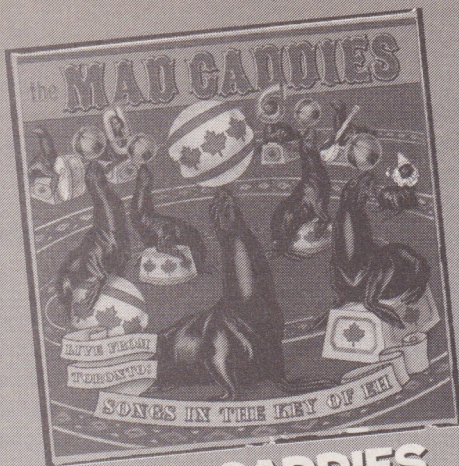


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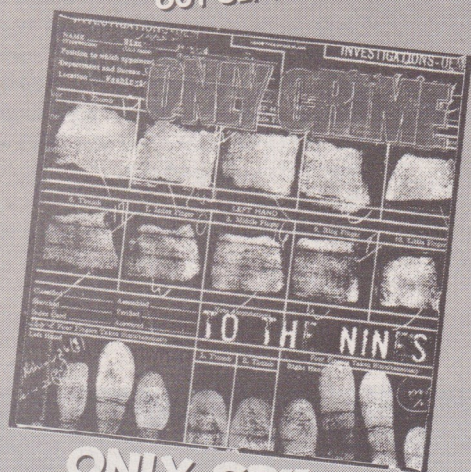
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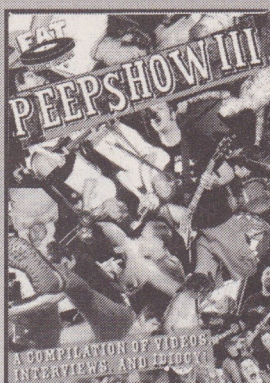
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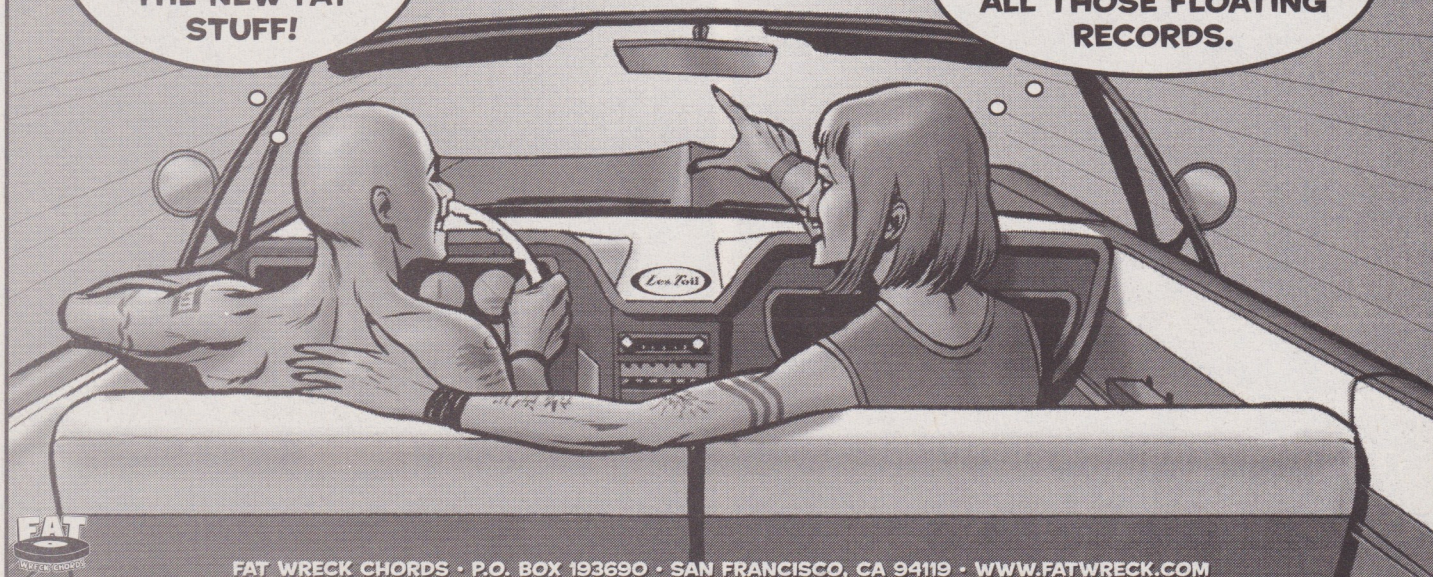
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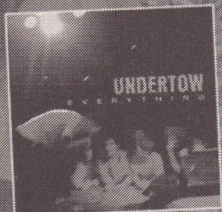
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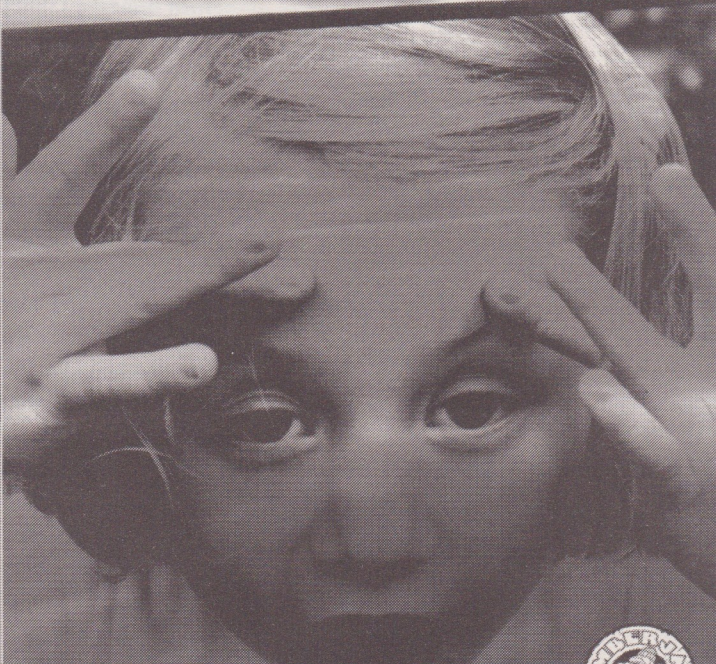
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When one goes through life, many never realize the impact they leave on others. I can never forget the day that I heard the song "Weatherman" blasting through my speakers on the Anti-Matter compilation, at first it was a little off putting since it had a strong sense of melody and still retained the tenacity that I was devouring at the time. Little did I know that Threadbare would quickly become one of my favorite bands of all time even though they broke up a few years prior to when I became accustomed to hardcore. Unfortunately like most bands during that time, they broke up

quicker than they could tour and another great band goes down in the history books. While other members went on to do various things like join Snapcase and also begin other bands like Picturesque, nothing ever would live up to their previous work. The vocalist Brian Lovro bowed away from the scene that he was so involved in and many speculated that he would never surface in anything again. Fast forward a few years and then, suddenly a new band is formed called The Blinding Light and who do they have as their vocalist, none other than Brian. Markedly different than his previous endeavors, this was attempting to be the loudest band on the planet. Like Slayer was tripping out on coke, The Blinding Light attracted attention from all walks of the hardcore spectrum. With his new band in full swing after their debut full length entitled "The Ascension Attempt", Brian took the time out of his Tuesday night to speak to me in regards to his past, present and sometimes cloudy future. This is what ensued.

THE BLINDING LIGHT \ BRIAN LOVRO

After having not been in a band for such a long time, why did you decide to resurface with Blinding Light?

It's not really something I decided. They had me come over one day and pretty much told me I was in. I didn't really have much choice in the matter. I knew that these guys in town were playing together and I wanted to hear it, so I went over to check it out. I hadn't done anything in so long so I wasn't really thinking about it, but they approached me and I was like 'Yeah, okay'. I always knew I wanted to do something after Threadbare, probably the day after Threadbare ended, but there wasn't a lot out there that sounded cool and in a lot of ways I was kind of sick of being in a band so it didn't really break my heart that nothing came along right after. I was burnt out on the music and scene that we were a part of, so I

decided to take some time and check out different things.

How did you become involved in punk, hardcore and the independent music scene?

I think I was in sixth or seventh grade and they were showing Another State of Mind on the USA Network, and somehow I always managed to turn on the TV when it was showing. I never saw the whole thing through, just bits and pieces, but I guess that's probably where it started. I started skateboarding in seventh or eighth grade and I guess it just grew from there.

Was there a pretty fertile music scene in your area when you were first getting into it?



When I first started going to shows around 1990 it was really neat because you'd get the weirdest line-ups but they were always so cool. I remember the first time Green Day played here, them and Admiral. Green Day's van pulled up and we all wondered what they were going to look like. We had all just gotten the last single before "Thirty Nine Smooth" and Terry got a single by Admiral before they played the show and we were all totally freaking on that. I think we were more excited to see Admiral at that point than we were Green Day. Both of their vans pulled up at the same time when everyone got out they all had bald heads. We had no idea who was who. I'm definitely one of those guys who can say shit has changed, because it's not even as remotely interesting as it was before.

How and when did Threadbare start to come into the picture for you?

We were all doing different projects at the start, but we'd go check each other out. We'd go to shows together, at the time we were listening to Reach for the first time. Those guys would go crazy. They were a really good band and nobody knows anything about them. Anyway, we started talking about how awesome it would be if we played in a band together. They been jamming together for about two years prior to me getting involved in it, but they had never really done anything too serious with it. I remember when Dustin sent me a practice tape of some of the stuff they had been doing and it was awesome. It was like a shitty boombox

recording, but I listened to it constantly for about a year.

Was this all happening at the end of high school?

It was in between high school and college. I took a year off after high school because I wasn't sure what to do. I had been talking to those guys about doing this band since right after I graduated but nothing ever really happened. At the time Dustin and Mike were in Bloodline, which was actually doing quite a bit, so I figured that nothing was going to happen. I decided to enroll myself in school in order to forget about it, but then it started looking like Bloodline was going to be breaking up, and they were like 'Do you want to still

do this?' I didn't know what to do. I had just committed myself to school and now they were telling me this? My parents got me a plane ticket to Minneapolis a couple weeks before I started school, and they all just met me at the airport. It was kind of weird because we didn't really know each other or anything. But over the next few weeks we just hung out and talked and practiced. The first practice we had was one of the craziest things I've ever done. I wasn't even there twenty minutes and we started playing. By the time we got done, I couldn't talk for the next three days. It went on for a good two to three hours. It was brutal. It was totally improv too. The first five or six songs we did came out of us playing together that first day. So that's pretty much how the band started. That first year I lived about ten hours away from everyone on the extreme west side of South Dakota so that I could go to school, and I would just drive or fly back to Sioux Falls or Minneapolis for shows.

The idea of emotive or introspective hardcore was relatively new when you guys first got together, did you receive a ton of flak for that?

Yeah, we did. But we didn't really fucking care. I can only speak for me and anything I ever wrote, but I didn't really have a lot of friends at that age so I didn't really have a lot of 'stabbed in the back' things to write about. I remember hearing about a lot of bad mouthing going on and people would stand there with their arms crossed while we played. We just felt like we played our asses off, fuck them. We weren't there to make friends. We were there to play.

You guys and Doghouse seem like an odd pairing. Was that something that just came about naturally, or were you consciously trying to separate yourself from a lot of what the traditional hardcore bands would do?

Honestly, I think that Doghouse was one of the only labels that were really interested in us at the time. I just remember they were really into what we were doing. Unfortunately, the pairing didn't work out really well. When Kent McClard (Ebulltion) heard the record, he was like I really wish I put that out. And in retrospect, so do I. It's really a crapshoot as to how anything is going to turn out with a label.

It seems like Threadbare made a conscious effort to separate itself from the Victory Records hardcore scene. Did you guys feel like it was a scene you didn't want to be a part of, or something that you just got dragged into occasionally?

I don't think Victory was any more interested in us than we were in them. We really didn't play that many shows. It might have been different if we had been out there more, but since we weren't, I don't think anyone really cared about it. I think when we were doing shows we were in the middle of PC hell, where you couldn't do anything without somebody getting pissed. I remember getting shit for the candy I ate one day. I'll be honest; I wasn't the best vegetarian, but come on. There was just a lot of weird stuff going on, it was a really touchy time. It's hard to say what our 'scene' really was. We just played with whomever we could play with.

Did it seem like things generally ran smoothly with Threadbare?

We had our fair share of problems. There were times where some band mates didn't get along. It wasn't like that all the time. There were occasional flare-ups, just like any band. I think a lot of our problems were our own. A lot of missed opportunities. We should have just gotten out there and played a shit load, but we didn't. At the time a couple of us were in school, so that was probably a big part of

it. The label problems, though, didn't really come until after the band was over. The label stuff can be difficult, but at the same time you can't really complain about it because you can put your own records out if you think you're going to get fucked over. I can't say I'm as open-minded as I was before. There's not really the sense of community that there once was, but things are different now.

What was the recording process like for Threadbare?

The first couple records we did were at really nice studios which I'm sure were crazy expensive at the time, but I hate recording. I don't think I ever realized 'Hey, I don't have to be here while Mike bangs on the drums for three hours,' so by the end I usually hated the songs and didn't care what anyone did with them. But I was young, and I didn't know what I was doing.

What caused the dissolution of Threadbare?

It just seemed like band wanted to go in different directions. Half of the band wanted to go more melodic; the other half wanted to keep going on the heavier stuff. A few of us weren't really getting along at that point, so it just seemed like a good time to call it a day. There wasn't a huge blowout or anything. There was tension, but as a whole we all got along pretty well.

After the break up did you distance yourself from everything for a while?

I was tired of the music in general. There was a whole scene around it that I didn't really want to be a part of. I wanted to try something different for a while.

I went to school off and on. I worked at a record store here for about six or seven years, which was really good for me because I got to check out a lot of different stuff. I practically gave away everything I owned but got it back tenfold, which tends to happen when you get into that record store thing.

Did you ever think that Threadbare would be cited as a significant influence in hardcore?

Hearing people talk about it in that regard is kind of trippy. I appreciate it, but I blush pretty easily. When we were doing that band we were all pretty happy with the records we were putting out, it was stuff we wanted to listen to at the time. Except for that last record, aside from two or three songs I don't really like it. Everybody else is awesome on it, but I suck. I'm thoroughly embarrassed with myself on that album. The band had been done for about six months by the time I recorded my part. Everything had been done at different studios, the bass at one place the drums at another. The whole thing was just really strung together.

What do you think the biggest differences are between hardcore then and now? What really makes your stomach turn?

You see a lot of trends come along. The hipster fashion people, come on I pick out my clothes on my own. I don't need someone telling me what to wear. We play these shows and half the bands are wearing eyeliner, it's just dumb. I think the whole thing is getting pretty silly. I don't know. It's hard for me to explain this stuff without sounding like an asshole. It doesn't really matter what I think. To be honest, I'm not really into too much of this stuff anymore. I don't want to say I've grown out of it, but it's gotten to the point where a lot of it doesn't sound that good to me anymore. There's so much out there it's

overwhelming. You really have to downsize or you'll go nuts.

After playing with so many bands over the years, what do you think has been the most rewarding experience?

I used to be really into watching kids go off at shows, I really enjoyed that. Even if we weren't playing just watching kids go crazy over these bands was awesome. But at this point, I'm really doing this for my own reasons. I'm not real interested in who is listening. I'm not really doing this to make some kid happy, if they like it that's great but I do this because I enjoy it. I like hearing these guys make a ton of racket. It's like me competing with them to see if I can actually scream louder than they play. And it's hard to do.

I've heard you're into underground hip-hop. Is that something new or have you always been into it?

I always liked hip-hop, Run DMC and stuff like that in the early 90's, when Yo MTV Raps was fucking awesome. It makes me wish I had grown up some other place, because then I would have had better access to all that stuff. I've been buying predominantly hip-hop records, but I don't know that it's really underground. I pretty much like anything from 92-95; it was all so awesome. At the same time though, I like old country and new metal too. I love ZZ Top. I like a lot of shit.

Are there any contemporary artists or bands that you think are doing something pretty awesome?

The one band that I've been into most recently is Isis. I've been listening to a lot of that, especially the last two albums. I like Agoraphobic Nosebleed, I think those guys are just insane. Anything Peter Stahl's in. I met

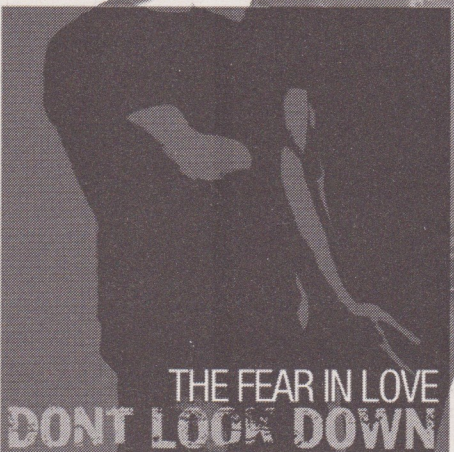
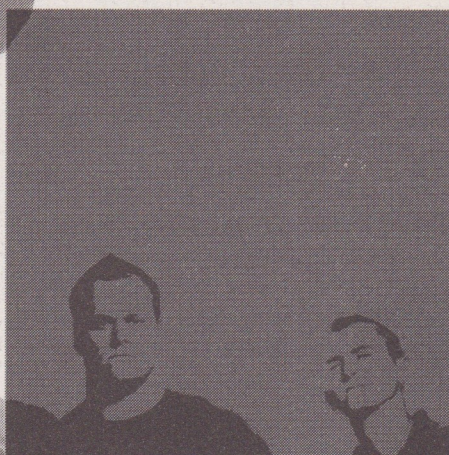
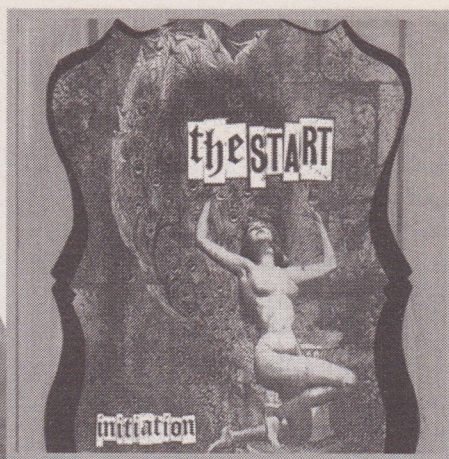
Greg Anderson from Goatsnake the other day; it was like 'You're the fucking man'. I like Pelican a lot. They're doing what a lot of heavier bands should do: kick out the singer.

Where does the Blinding Light plan on heading?

Unfortunately, a big chunk of the band can't tour, but that might change. I think as far as musically, we're trying to work on actual song writing. That seems to be an area where we needed a little work. We've got a ton of new shit that's fucking brutal. But basically we're just letting it go where it goes, there's no real agenda.

What advice would you give to a kid who is just starting a band?

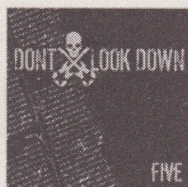
Do what you want. Don't listen to anybody. Who gives a fuck what people think? There's a lot of trial and error. Everybody is going to get burned at some point. It really depends. There are so many factors that go into making your experience. Have fun. Don't get caught up in the bullshit. Do it to have fun. It's pretty obvious which bands are doing it to have fun and which ones aren't, and there seem to be a lot of them who aren't. — Ray Harkins



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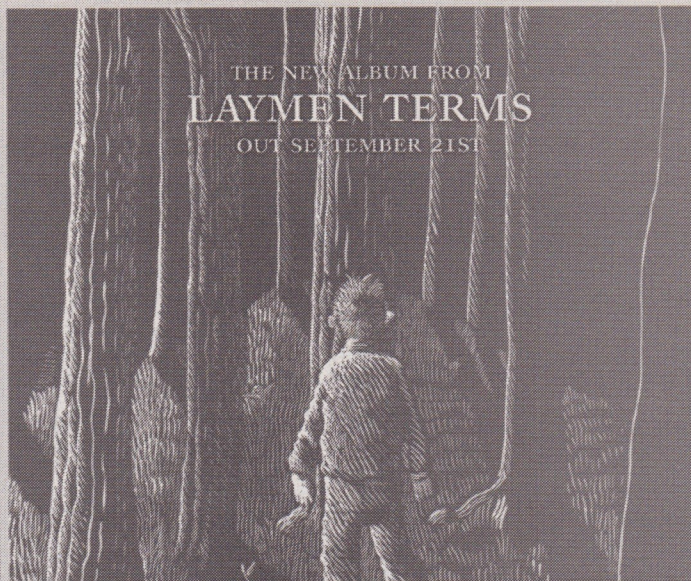
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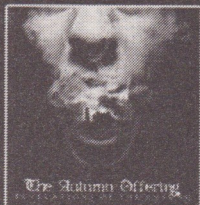
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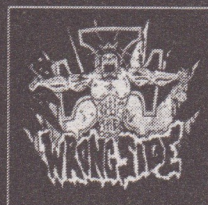
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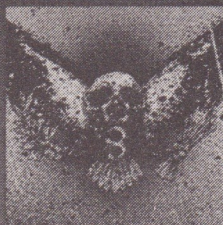
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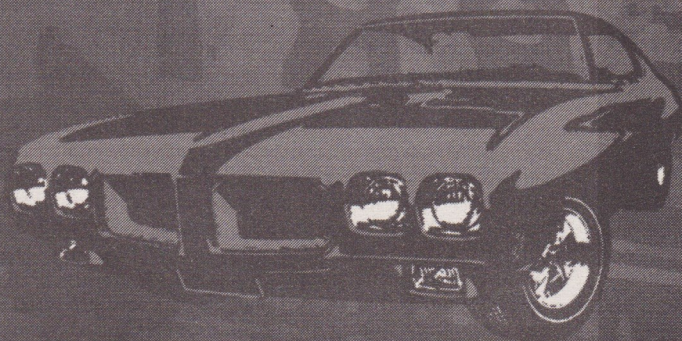
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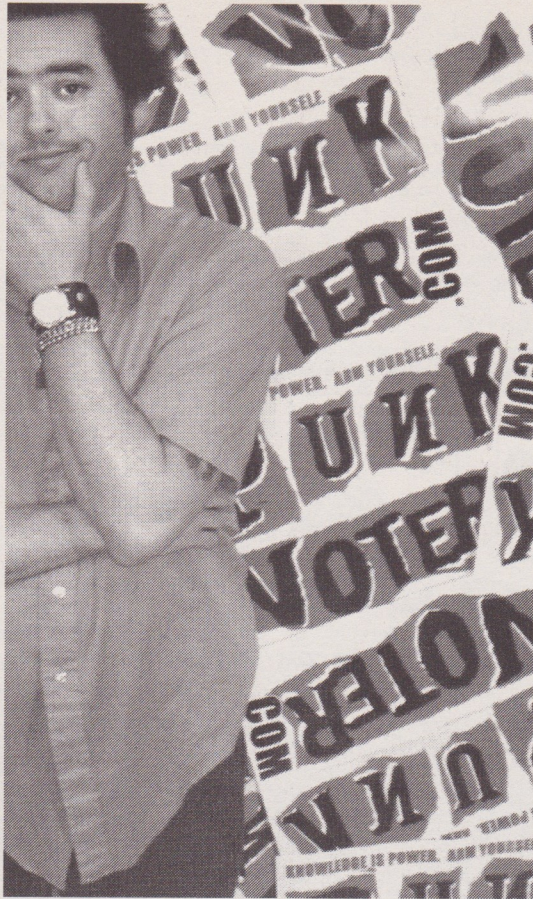


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/ FAT MIKE

"Never doubt the ability of a small group of committed citizens to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead

On November 2nd, you will have more power in a single moment than you have ever had before. The Presidential race is potentially so close this year that something is happening that neo-conservatives have never thought possible, something that the founders of this country believed was absolutely necessary: a ragtag band of outsiders with nothing but their principles, a utopian vision for the world and the deafening clamor of revolution ringing

in their ears may decide the very future of this nation. The race is so close that the punks can pick the President.

Civic duty is a lot more punk rock in this day and age than railing against the establishment with an anarchy patch - and the kids know it. No longer will fat cats and swill merchants and hate mongers be able to point a finger at the youth of America and cry apathy. The young people of the United States are the most politically active and organized that they have been since the civil rights and peace movements of the 60s (and the union movement before that). The upcoming election is likely the most important of your life thus far.

It's an old adage that bad politics make for good rock and roll, but this go round, bad politics has also mobilized rock and rollers, from the Boss and Eddie Vedder to the fans.

And then there's Fat Mike. He's not only stormed the Halls of Democracy with the Rock Against Bush compilations - he has provided the podium and the megaphone for an entire subculture, and maybe a whole generation, with Punkvoter.com.

Fat Mike and I recently discussed the importance of the upcoming election, the punk vote and the stunning power of Punkvoter.com.

(PS watch documentaries like Robert Greenwald's Unprecedented and Outfoxed. Read Banana Republicans and Crashing the Party and the Fourth Power and The People's History of the United States. And magazines like Clamor and Mother Jones and the Nation. Follow the Guerrilla News Network at Guerrillanews.com. Make your own movies. Write OP-ED pieces or letters to the editor and submit them to your local newspapers. Make your voice heard again and again.)

How great an impact will young people have on the outcome of the upcoming election?

We'll have to see, but I bet the numbers will be considerably higher than four years ago.

Will John Kerry have the punks to thank for his presidency?

If it's a close race within 500,000 votes, I think he may.

When did you first have the idea for Punkvoter?

A few months after the 2000 election.

What, in your estimation, have been some of the successes of Punkvoter?

Kids are getting off their asses and starting to mobilize.

How many people have you helped register to vote?

Not sure, but we are getting over 16 million hits a month on the website. I believe that our goal of getting 500,000 kids involved has been met.

How many kids under voting age do you think you have inspired to care about politics and to be mobilized in upcoming elections?

Somewhere in that 500,000. Those kids are just as important too. It's not all about voting, it's about convincing friends and family to vote also. That's what the real trick is.

I imagine you get to see this first hand on the Warped Tour. What has the response been like? Are the kids psyched to get copies of Robert Greenwald documentaries like Uncovered?

I hung out with kids almost every day at the Punkvoter booth. It was amazing. We registered a few hundred kids every day, and tons of people told me that they turned their parents with help from the Rock Against Bush DVD. Tons of soldiers thanked me as well. They don't want to go back to the fucking desert to protect the Iraqi oil fields.

Assuming Senator Kerry wins, how will Punk Voter's role evolve? Will you support a goal of drawing the Democratic Party away from centrist politics towards the progressive ideas of Kucinich, Dean and Sharpton?

We are a very left wing organization, but we are pragmatists. First problem is Bush. Next problem is staying on Kerry. Then there are many others. After this next election we are just going to keep going.

How important is it to you that we have independent parties for a multiplicity

of voices? Will the independents and activists have to get our voices heard from the ground up -- from grassroots efforts?

Independents are incredibly important, but mostly in smaller races. Until we have a national representative government more like Canada, a third national party is pretty useless. If Nader got 5% of the vote, and that turned into 5% of Congress it would make sense to vote for him. But right now all he is doing is helping Bush.

Will we ever get rid of the electoral college and truly give one vote to each citizen?

Hope so.

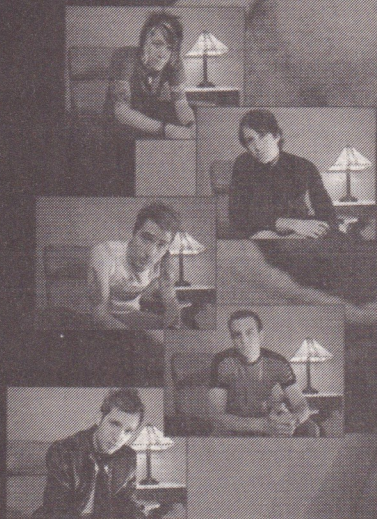
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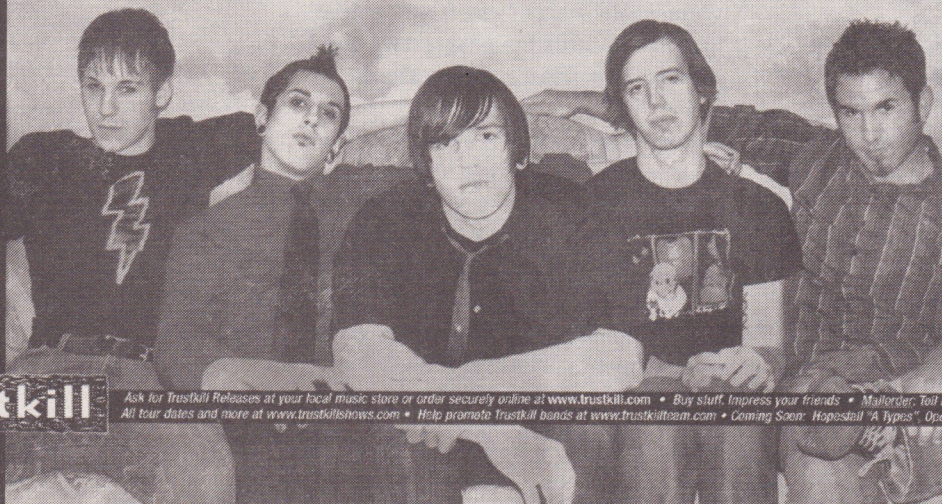
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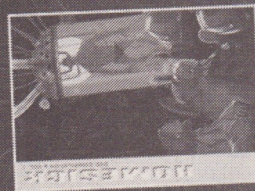
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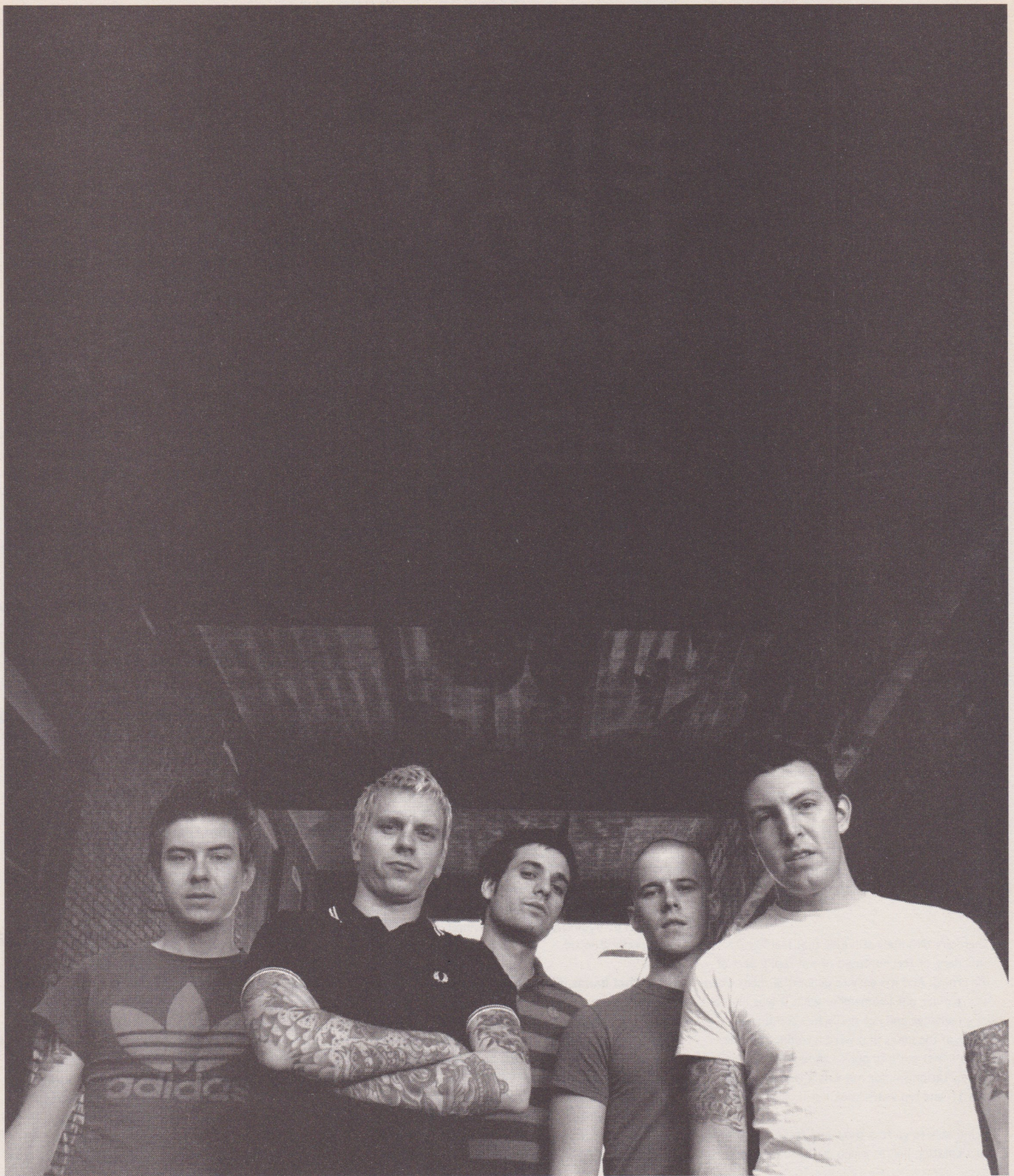
THE EX- PLO- SION

The Explosion is proof of an increasingly complex relationship between punk as a culture, a musical genre and a commodity. The group not only plays relentless, blistering and atmospheric punk rock, but they're as DIY as they come. When I arrived at the Tarantulas Laboratories in Silverlake, bassist Damian, Rama and the rest of the Tarantulas crew were busy silkscreening hundreds of custom Explosion posters to give out to hardcore fans at an upcoming show in Boston, the band's default. It should come as no surprise then that the Explosion has maintained their uncompromising underground and outsider outlook while parlaying themselves onto a major label - Virgin.

It turns out Damian and I grew up in the same stomping ground - me, New Jersey; he, the Philly suburbs - and attended a lot of the same shows. As we waxed nostalgic about the old days of Weston, the Bouncing Souls and Krishna-core, I realized that the old, petty arguments about indie labels versus major labels are all but irrelevant today. And the Explosion's upcoming Virgin full-length will certainly be one of the most important punk releases of the year.

How do you define punk at this point when it is used in so many different ways?

It's a tricky word, it's a really tricky word. I remember it really just hitting me hard in the face, maybe two years ago when I went into K-Mart to buy some paint



and right in the section near the gaudy, cheap jewelry was teen clothing and it was like black and red stripes with safety pins already in there - it was Joe Boxer. It's just like, fuck man...and the whole term "mall punk," and just that Avril Lavigne will have a mosh pit in her video and she'll break a guitar. Everything is so cheap - a stage dive - I think the Olson twins did it in their movie. Those are the things that, discovering them for the first time, it was just like the most important thing to me.

Who knows, maybe the guys in the Simple Plan have the greatest punk record collection in the world. I doubt it, but... So, I don't really know if it's about cred or knowing your history, but for me when I first got into punk and hardcore it was like discovering a whole way of life that spoke to me louder and more clear than anything I had really tried to do before that. And it wasn't something where you were like, "oh, I'll go to a concert every month or two." It was like, wherever you could, wherever you could get it. There were always new bands to check out and new records to look for and somebody's record collection to go through and your older brother's t-shirts to try and figure out. It sounds cliché to say that it's a state of mind or an attitude... As a culture it exists in people and in music and in what people are trying to do and their attitudes, what they are trying to do with their lives. But as a musical genre, it's hard.

What do you personally feel like is the role of a punk band in this day and age?

I think you can purvey the idea that there is another way of expressing yourself. I don't think every punk band has to be politically minded or tell kids how to put on a DIY show in their basement. But there is more. I don't think that you should just be cover models and hope to get invited to a party that Paris Hilton's at. It's trying to turn kids on to [the fact that] there's a different way of thinking, there's a different world.

There are definitely still kids that feel like outsiders, or feel confused or not really part of the crowd. And it's easy to generalize them when you're older, but I remember what it was like to be a teenager and not really feel comfortable. Some of the ideas that were introduced to me when I first got into punk - something as simple as vegetarianism, for me, was a real eye opener. I was 16 and ten years later, I still believe in it.

Being able to go to a show and feel like you are participating just as much as the band, that

there's an equal playing field, is awesome. A band like us - we're there because of someone else's hard work and a lot of band's ethics and passion. We really are part of the same lineage.

What are some of the bands that first had a big impact on you?

I remember buying the first Minor Threat EP cassette at the mall and just like staring at it all the way home, like, "what's this skinhead on the cover?!" It sketched me out a little bit. Then you throw it on and it's just so abrasive. Minor Threat and Bold and Youth Of Today was just so raw. It was something that you would listen to close to your stereo.

Those bands, and the Misfits...I was young and you just see these older guys around, skaters, or cool kids at your school wearing these shirts, and your like, "that's a cool Sex Pistols shirt, maybe I should try and get one of their records." I remember even just buying Doc Martens then was really hard - you had to go to South Street and my parents wouldn't let me wear them to school. Now you can get Doc Martens anywhere.

Were you in high school bands?

I wasn't in high school bands. When I went up to Boston for art school, there wasn't much happening and I just skated the first whole semester. Then shows were starting to happen up there and then I was hanging out with the guys in Ten Yard Fight and some of the old Wrecking Crew guys, Rama was doing a label. Anthony was a guitar player for Ten Yard Fight. He got kicked out of the band and wanted to start a new band - it was called In My Eyes - and he was like, "you wanna play bass?" and I didn't even own a bass. I just found one cheap and just started practicing with them. That got me playing music and I just loved it, ya know? The Explosion started three-quarters of the way into In My Eyes happening and when In My Eyes broke up, I was playing a lot of shows with the Explosion and doing pretty well and having fun and it never really stopped.

What bands now are you inspired by?

I think the Bronx are awesome and I'm psyched to be friends with them and have them do stuff with our label. They have a "new band-ness" that's the good type of "new band-ness." There's a new band-ness where you see a band and they're still trying to feel each other out, they're kind of awkward or something's not quite right. But the kind of new band-ness with them

is that they have that fucking drive in attitude and enthusiasm and you can tell that nobody is tainted from touring yet, nobody's taking it easy. They just go all out and I think that's fucking awesome. When I see them play, I just want to play harder.

The Spitz are another band on our label who are just like - I had always like them and knew them but when they gave me that record I was just so impressed. I can say that about so many other bands that we're friends with, like Darker My Love. But as far as just listening to stuff and having no personal connection, the Exploding Hearts record I thought was really really cool. They got in that van accident, and my heart goes out to them and their friends and family. [DJ Dangermouse's] "The Grey Album" [which mixes the White Album and Jay-Z's "The Black Album"] really inspired me. For him to just get that idea...and before anybody knew about this and before everybody downloaded it 3 million times, it was just an idea in his head and the only motivation he had to do it was to see it through and he locked himself in his room for three weeks and just did it. That's truly art.

I thought the Yeah Yeah Yeah's record was awesome. There are some bands in Boston that have been giving me demos that I think are really good. And I think Ted Leo is brilliant. He never fails to impress me. His confidence and his guitar playing and his songwriting are fucking awesome.

Have you finished recording your new record?

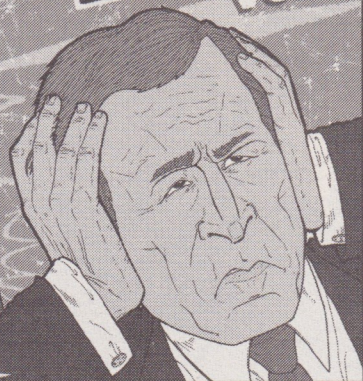
Yeah, we finished recording, but we're still mixing. I still don't feel like it's complete because I don't know what everything sounds like yet. You want everything to be perfect. We're going to be there soon I think.

What can fans expect from the new record?

This is our second full length and we've always released EP's. But we are a real band and the reason we haven't been able to put out album after album is because we've had real stuff going on. In our lives, school, jobs - do I keep playing music? - and we've stuck through it all. On this new record, there's a lot more songwriting from more members of the band. Matt, as a singer, has just developed so well. And it's hilarious because for Matt it's been beer and cigarettes the whole time and his voice has just grown. And I think the record really shows off Andrew, our drummer, really well. And I think it's not going to be like "Flash Flash Flash" because it has just been years since that record. We've grown - and we're not trying to become Radiohead or anything - but more people are writing, it's a full album, there's a really good mix of songs, good energy and a lot of cool stories and messages. - Interview: Charles Spano / Photograph: John Shearer

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VOL 2



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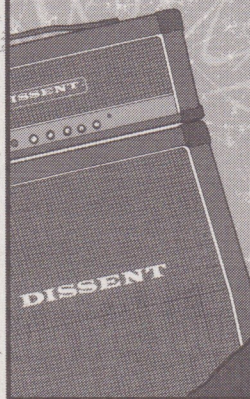
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ROCK AGAINST BUSH

VOL 1

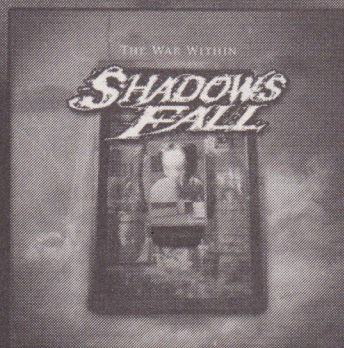


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RECORDING REVIEWS

Alexisonfire "Watch Out!" CD

If I were to look up the word anomaly in the dictionary, I might find a picture of Alexisonfire right beside it. The surge in popularity (especially in their home country of Canada) is nothing short of astonishing from a band that a few years ago no one cared about. This being their second proper full-length on Equal Vision Records it is plain to see that this is leaps and bounds better than their previous inconsistent effort. Musically it still treads the same water that they had waded in before but becomes more expansive with Dallas Green's vocals taking precedence in some songs rather than being an after thought. Their punk roots show in this often-hecktic song structure they induce. For those seeking a shot in the arm of originality, look no further for Alexisonfire is your cure. (Equal Vision > PO Box 14 > Hudson, NY > 12543) Ray Harkins

All Else Failed "This Never Happened" CD

Adversity has laced this bands path ever since the get go with numerous lineup changes, a self-induced hiatus and sketchy label support, All Else Failed should be commended for taking care of business and continuing to create music. While some may say this is their swan song, I would offer

a rebuttal saying that this is the beginning of a whole new era for the band as they have a solid lineup, amazing songs and a will to survive. Light years ahead of their previous work both lyrically and sonically; one can expect a cathartic journey into something fresh and honest. Having more in common with bands like Deadguy than a band like Atreyu, you can tell their focus is not to roll with whatever is happening right now, but to create their own work. The doses of melody and melodic singing throughout this record may take away from the consistency of the record as a whole but they lay everything but the kitchen sink at you. All in all this is a release that has to be heard by everyone and should be a great contender for record of the year. (Century Media / Abacus > 2323 West El Segundo Blvd > Hawthorne, CA > 90250) Shawn Gardner

All State Champion "Is It Nothing To You" CD

All State Champion could actually be quite huge. Like Sparta, they play broad, anthemic hardcore music with the bombast of U2. And while not as biting and pointed as Sparta, they do have a way with combining aggression and hooks - take the blasting, bittersweet "Regret's A Bitter Taste" or the grinding, Pixies-influenced "Second Chance." They've got something goin' on for sure. Maybe they're too produced for die-hard punk rockers, but I think they have the talent and sheen to take the mainstream, and possibly a major label,

by storm. (FiveOneInc. > PO Box 1868 > Santa Monica, CA > 90406) Charles Spano

The Answer "You Had Your Chance" CD

You can really read some books by their cover. The Answer play fast, hard and with no apologies for being straight edge or whatever else they sing about. There is a great influx of bands from the Seattle/Portland area that are making an impact nationally and if The Answer is able to get out there on the road, I have no doubts that they will as well. Sounding like a mixture between the older Champion material and early Swedish hardcore like Shield and Abinada it's a good bang for your buck. (Excursion > PO Box 20224 > Seattle, WA > 98102) Ray Harkins

As We Fight "Black Nails and Bloody Wrists" CD

Worst record title. With that being said, As We Fight are a six piece (featuring two vocalists) from Denmark that seem to draw a ton of inspiration the mid-90's hardcore that was created in the U.S. with bands like Morning Again, Prayer For A Cleansing and Day Of Suffering. Overall the record lacks on the originality factor but I am sure after seeing them in a live environment it would make more sense, as I am sure it is powerful in the live setting. The production on this record is thick and brings out the bands power courtesy of the upcoming European producer Tue Madsen. This makes sense for the European market but I don't know if this would

fly in the states as the market is already crowded enough. (Goodlife > PO Box 114 > 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium) Ray Harkins

Audio Karate "Lady Melody" CD

Audio Karate's musical transformation from their 2001 debut, "Space Camp," and this year's "Lady Melody" is one of the better "band-leaves-cocoon" stories to arrive in recent times. Whereas this band at one point could have been lumped into a container of fungible emo/punk bands, Audio Karate have now established themselves as purveyors of a delicate formula of early East Bay punk (a la Crimpshrine) rock with a conscious desire to incorporate heavy mid-paced rock riffs that's a style all of its own. "Lady Melody" barely threads any relation to "Space Camp," and the biggest difference comes from the vastly improved lead vocals of Arturo Barrios. Barrios moves from being a mere melodic singer into a true front man - his vibrant, but gravelly rasp is similar to that of Anti-Flag's Justin Sane, but with a little more low-end grunt. The Blasting Room quality recording emphatically launches Barrios' vocals above the churning guitars, and takes control when the entire rhythm section often feels like it's dancing to its own beat (especially on the body swaying "Catch and Release" and the molten "Gypsyqueen"). Audio Karate additionally impress with a nearly endless arsenal of guitar playing that touches upon surf, lounge, and occasionally, straight-up heavy metal. With such diversity on hand, it's no wonder that all eleven songs have a distinct and moody appeal to them. "Lady Melody's" range of sounds however, are hardly divergent, and thus, Audio Karate never seem coercive in trying to fit a certain idea into a non-working pattern. And oh yeah, the ninth tune, "Aim to Please" is fucking marvelous. As more and more punk-bred bands inch toward squeaky clean pastures, it's nice every now and then to see at least one band earnestly get their hands dirty, and "Lady Melody" is steeped in an impenetrable coating of sawdust. (Kung Fu > PO Box 38009 > Hollywood, CA > 90038) Jordan A. Baker

The Belles "Idle Acres" CD

You think Dan Askew and Second Nature may be taking a break and folding up the label but they come out at you again with a slew of new releases, all of which are staggering. The Belles are a two piece from the Midwest that does not sound like The White Stripes. Borrowing notes from Belle and Sebastian, Nick Drake and



BAD RELIGION "THE EMPIRE STRIKES FIRST" CD

I can only hope that when I'm approaching middle-age territory like the band members of Bad Religion (minus Mr. Wackerman), I have the same kind of incipient, yet reflective charge to my perspective on life. The urgency reflected on "The Empire Strikes First," the band's umpteenth full-length, is at once, and as expected, both defiant, and stunningly relevant to the current, polarized political and social environment. But Bad Religion are no meek sloganeers - the band, focused through the effusive (and academic) wisdom of Greg Graffin are social scientists, chomping at the bit to reverse a downward spiral that much of the American populace continues to reinforce. This cauldron of energy basks nearly brighter than ever on "The Empire Strikes First," as Bad Religion, musically, continues to define the boundaries of the melodic hardcore genre that they so dynamically constructed two decades earlier.

Kicking off this release, for the first time in Bad Religion history, is a short, instrumental tune called "Overture," which stirs up the air for something real big. That 'something real big' is actually a graceful merger into the thunderous, double-bass leading, face rippling "Sinister Rouge." The former is perhaps one of the heaviest songs ever written by the band, and its two minutes of jet-propulsion intensity slaps the listener with a most gratifying, blood-pumping effect. (Think back to the whiplash effects of "Big Bang" and "Automatic Man.") From there, "The Empire Strikes First" settles into a rapid-fire groove, with the next three tracks, "Social Suicide," "Atheist Peace," and "All There Is," stomping cohesively right into the brilliant standout, and first single, the mid-paced, "Los Angeles Is Burning." With Graffin's indelible tone, and the band's trademarked oozy ahs on hand, this mid-paced classic sing-along recalls the best of the band's back catalog, in the vein of "21st Century Digital Boy," "Infected," and the supremely underrated "Broken," from "The Process of Belief." Bad Religion follow up "Los Angeles..." with what I believe will be the song of the year - and the undeniably harsh soundtrack to the Bush Jr. administration, "Let The Eat War." You don't have to be a "loony-lefty" to appreciate the snarky, fatalistic perspective offered on this song, and the band's lyrical collaboration with rapper Sage Francis, delivers one of the release's truly defining, majestic moments.

The second half of "The Empire Strikes First" noticeably tracks the band moving into more developed/experimental territory. The catchy, but scathing "God's Love" smacks of Graffin's usual biting wit, and the tenth track, "The Quickening," features the band in an all out, intoxicating binge of musical showmanship, with all three guitars ablaze, and drumming that seems beyond the powers of mankind. The title track to this release is stylistically reminiscent of Graffin's previously outlandish lead vocal endeavors ("I Love My Computer" anyone?), but overall Graffin's sickly pleasurable singing of "EM-P-I-R-E," is bound to get bottled into your head, and the song's lyrical focus on the United States' 'we'll get you first' approach to war with Iraq, leaves no target unblemished. The beauty in Bad Religion's political undercurrent is that it treats both the listener and the target with respect - these are songs that can easily test the strength of time, and survive challenges of fleeting, finger-pointing passion. The final three songs on here are the most enigmatic of the bunch, with the "Atomic Garden" like tune, "Beyond Electric Dreams"; the folksy, jangly (and ultimately, disappointing) rock of "Boot Stamping on A Human Face Forever"; and lastly, the epic searing finale, "Live Again - The Fall of Man." The last tune is particularly appropriate, in that what Bad Religion conquers on this release is not so much an outpouring of negativity, but what it counters through inspiration, continuous with the band's 20 plus year path - that there is another side to life, and that we have the choice to embrace and prosper along that other path, or we can continue to stew in our own morass.

Make no bones about it, "The Empire Strikes First" is another legendary Bad Religion release that deserves to stand tall among the band's already historical discography. You're honestly cheating yourself if you pass this one up. (Epitaph > 2798 Sunset Blvd. > Los Angeles, CA > 90026) Jordan A. Baker

Built To Spill, The Belles will stun you with their captivating song writing and pop sensibilities. Normally stuff like this I would immediately wretch and have an attention span that would last all of a song but in this case they held my interest to the very end. Coupled with an immaculate recording (courtesy of Ed Rose) and even more pristine packaging, you have something very special that will be hard to duplicate for years to come. (Second Nature > PO Box 11542 > Kansas City, MO > 64138) Ray Harkins

Breather Resist "Charmer" CD

"Charmer" seems to start in the middle, which is an appropriate beginning for a band with so much mass and momentum. Breather Resist is as brutal as Deadguy, as spastic and intense as the Jesus Lizard. Like the late 80s Seattle rock scene gloriously destroying itself, this is heavy metal punk rock with innovation and a total disregard for the boundaries that supposedly divide genres. Unfortunately the subtler shades are hidden beneath growling vocals and unstoppable intensity - but listen, listen closely to a song like "A Social Worker's Nightmare" - this is revolutionary music that doesn't care if it is too aggressive for anyone to notice. (Jade Tree > 2310 Kennwynn Road > Wilmington, DE > 19810) Charles Spano

Call Me Lightning "The Trouble We're In" CD

Not to sound like a scenester snob - but when did Revelation start signing bands no one has ever heard of? And when did they start signing bands that sound like they would be at home on Troublemaker Unlimited, GSL or 31G? I know that's rude to say and I'm sure Call Me Lightning have a decent following in the mid-west (maybe not though) but to have your first full length on Revelation come out, out of nowhere - well it caught me, and many by surprise. Especially since they are not your generic hardcore band that many labels will sign with no name out and about simply because their music is sellable. Call Me Lightning are hardly sellable to the masses, which is kind of why I like them. You though this was a mean review didn't you? Well, it isn't. I actually like what I hear, it's just so confusing to me that a big label like Revelation would take a big chance on a band that sounds like The Minutemen & The Birthday Party. Although Call Me Lightning do have a sound of their own, it's hard to say when it's like - go to the bands web-site to hear for yourself (www.callmelightning.com), but the one sheet is pretty dead on when they say they band sounds like The Minutemen, Led Zeppelin & The Birthday Party. I won't disagree with that, but I would add Q & Not U to the mix, they have a big influence on this three-piece band. A refreshing band and exciting sound but still a random debut release on an unexpected label. Two thumbs up. (Revelation > PO Box 5232 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92615) Shawn Gardner

Coliseum "S/T" CD

Once again, Ryan Patterson is not content running a label and being in a band, he must be in TWO bands in order to fill up his time. Louisville, Kentucky I have lauded the praises of for years and as long as they keep pumping out this type of quality then I cannot stop the acclaim I give. When I first heard the demo from these guys, I was unimpressed. It was four songs of uninspiring, heavy punk that did not go anywhere or have any power. It lacked that quality that most bands from Louisville have, heart. Then the news of them signing to Level Plane surfaces and my interest is peaked as Level Plane rarely releases bad music. So my faith was restored and rightfully so as this full-length packs enough punch to knockout a heavyweight boxer. Relying heavily on Motorhead with a dash of Black Flag sprinkled on as their main inspiration, you know not to expect the next Taking Back Sunday. These twelve songs rattle through your speaker like a herd of buffaloes killing most in their wake. The layout is dark and sparse to compliment the music with the only picture of them playing is very distorted. Steal your brothers lunch money for this. (Level Plane > PO Box 7926 > Charlottesville, VA > 22906) Ray Harkins

The Cure "S/T" CD

It seems like more and more bands in the indie/emo genres namedrop The Cure to add a little bit of credibility to their lists of influences. Because of this, Robert Smith and company have captured a whole new audience with their brooding pop style, but how many are fans and how many just "know of them"? Unfortunately, as groundbreaking and influential as the band has grown over time, more people can name five albums they own of Cure-inspired emo before naming one Cure disc. The band has achieved iconic status, but the question remains: are people actually still listening? If not, they damn well should be, and their latest self-titled effort reiterates that same sentiment. Let me precede this with one warning: this review is horribly, horribly biased. I love The Cure. This isn't objective journalism, it's the rant of a fan. I have a deep place in my heart for them, but then again it's difficult for most any writer to formally review "The Cure". How do we balance our memories of renowned albums like "Disintegration" with our modern expectations of how a band that has been in the music biz for decades should sound? The Cure has arguably slumped in the past 10 years or so, but this album lives up to the material that developed their legacy in the first place. The album fades in with Smith's soft, hurt voice singing "I...can't find myself" in "Lost", setting the standard for an album that carries his trademark wounded, vulnerable sound. "I Don't Know What's Going On" is a powerfully strong track that may be

the best on the entire disc. While Smith might face criticism for singing about hardships while being rich, famous, and happily married, his music still carries an honest integrity that any fan can recognize as truly sincere. "The End of the World", the first single, is a catchy, near-optimistic tune (despite the name) that is reminiscent of some of the band's best work. As expected, "The Cure" is chockfull of dark, gloomy, depressing goodness, but somewhere in this album there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I can't find it in the lyrics or in the 80's-inspired rhythms, but there seems to be a little more hope in this one. Every song flows well into the next, but maintains a significant individuality (a feat many albums fail to attain). But despite slight differences, it's unmistakably Cure, and long time fans will be more than pleased. It's the same method they've been using for 30 some odd years, Smith still has his weird ass black hair, and the group still writes pop gems that contradict their dark personas. In a nutshell, it's old-school Cure, and very few things can beat it. The Cure have done a marvelous thing over the years; created and maintained their own style and image that is unique enough to carry them through generations of music fans. With their latest effort, they have cemented themselves as a band that has a sound that is timeless. Every track is a solid representation of the band, paving a path forward rather than developing nostalgia for their older work. I can only hope that everyone has discovered The Cure by this point (or at least given them a chance), because if they haven't, they are missing out on a band that, clichéd as it sounds, has set a standard for almost half the music in their library. (Geffen) Elliot Cole

Death Before Disco "Party Bullet" CD

This is something very unique that is for sure. While most bands in Europe are content playing metal influenced hardcore (like about 98% of bands around today) Death Before Disco are creating some original music which is a difficult task to do. Not to say that this is a highly enjoyable record because at times their uniqueness is a strike against them but overall a very meaningful package is presented. At times hitting the same strides that Haste did on their last record and also sharing the same space as their contemporaries in Silent Drive, Death Before Disco croon, yell and sing their way into your ears. The guitar work on this is top notch. (Goodlife > PO Box 114 > 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium) Ray Harkins

Death Threat "Now Here Fast" CD

I will go on record saying that I don't get this band. No matter how many records they put out, who they go on tour with or who spills their guts on how much this band means to them, I can't get it. I will admit that live they put on quite an energetic performance that usually incites many stage dives but this does not validate any of their recorded material. I think people just fool themselves into liking the band in preparation for their live shows. Regardless, this is more of the same Death Threat that you either love

or hate. So if you need another record to prep up for their newest tour, then look no further. (Tripple Crown Records > 331 West 57th St. #472 > NYC, NY > 10019) Ray Harkins

Dillenger Escape Plan "Miss Machine" CD

Thumbs up, with reservations. Miss Machine, the second full-length album from Dillenger Escape Plan is really really good, but not great. The sophomore album might be the best metal-core album released this year, but that says more about the dismal state of metal-core than it does about the album. In between "Calculating Infinity" and "Miss Machine" Dillenger Escape Plan recorded with Mike Patton, and had an extremely brief stint with Sean Ingram. Big shoes to fill indeed. The current vocalist for Dillenger Escape Plan borrows heavily from Mike Patton on "Miss Machine", but can you blame him. The music of DEP remains tight as a (insert tired analogy here) and is exceptional. But the new album doesn't produce a track like "43% burnt" where you here it for the first time, play it 10 times in a row and imagine yourself playing the said track live in front of everyone you've ever wanted to impress / blow away in your life. "Miss Machine" will grow on you, but still I was left a bit disappointed. Yeah, thumbs up buuutttttt..... (Relapse Records) Scott McDonald

Doctor Mix and the Remix "Wall of Noise" CD

Leave it to the French to come up with a name like Doctor Mix and the Remix. But, this final volume of the Metal Urbain anthology (Paris' Suicide or Wire if you've never heard of 'em) shows a bleak and relentless band of art rockers at their broken, synth punk best. Covering the Stooges ("No Fun"), the Seeds ("Out Of the Question," "Six Dreams"), Roxy Music ("Grey Lagoons") and the Velvet Underground like they were a darker Joy Division ("Sister Ray"), Doctor Mix brings on a gritty, junkie vision of blistering garage rock in a analog synth future nightmare. The final chapter of the French no wave in all its kill yr idols glory. For more of the story, check out the Metal Urbain article in Ugly Things - www.UglyThings.com. (Acute Records) Charles Spano

Don't Look Down "The Fear In Love" CD

Talk about what a producer can do for a band. From my previous inclinations of this band, they were just a juvenile Strung Out rip-off band that relied on their core fan base rather than moving forward musically. Add a weathered producer such as Brian McTernan to the mix and watch the change from a unpolished pop-punk band to a melancholy

pop punk band. Reminding me of the mellower side of Thrice, Don't Look Down show that they can be a legitimate band and write some catchy songs while not sounding redundant. The vocal harmonies on the record are absurd as they sound like 3 or 4 part harmonies. All in all a very big surprise. (Nitro > 7071 Warner Ave FPMB 736 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92647) Ray Harkins

The Exit "Home For An Island" CD

On first listen, I was bored by this record - but there is something stunning and careless about the Exit. "Don't Push," the first track on "Home For An Island" heralds the arrival of a bunch of Violent Femmes obsessives playing like the Talking Heads doing Reggae. There are shades of the Stills and Radio 4 on this album, and some of it sounds way too polished, but you gotta credit these guys for fearlessly touting unhip influences (U2) while carrying on with the energy of the (much more brilliant) Ted Leo. Points for making an unlikely great album that, while not measuring up to its best influences, is still pretty darn original. (Some Records > 345 7th Avenue, 24th Floor > New York, NY > 10001) Charles Spano

The Explosion "Red Tape" CDep

Wow, it seems like it's been a while since The Explosion put out a new full-length record. Well that will change soon, in the meantime this three song CDep will get you hyped for the band's next release. Coming from the band's own label, Tarantulas, this EP has three new songs, that I assume at least one of them will be on the next record. Sure this one is short but it's cheap and fans can find something in this. The Red Tape EP's opening track is "Here I Am" which seems like it would be the band's first single when the full length is released. I might be wrong, but from the sound of it (very clean and clear) and the fact that it's the most radio friendly sounding song The Explosion has ever written I like to think I might be correct on this one. Track 2 is a more typical sounding Explosion song called "Filthy Insane" which is full of sing-a-longs and features the sound that were more apparent on earlier records. The best part of the EP was the nice surprise of "The Drawback" a cover song from Warsaw. That scores some points right there. Now I just wait for the full length on Virgin. (Tarantulas Laboratories > 3371 Glendale Blvd..# 471 > Los Angeles, CA > 90039) Shawn Gardner

Face Tomorrow "The Closer You Get" CD

Face Tomorrow are a fairly huge indie band in The Netherlands, and yet if you brought them up in ordinary conversation here, most likely, blank stares would be on the receiving end. With their second full-length, the airtight "The Closer You Get," I'm convinced that Face Tomorrow will be resigned to same, "hidden gem" status where they've rested in years past. At least

there's always wishful thinking that change might be imminent. Face Tomorrow are a guitar-driven mid-paced post-hardcore band with some of the best lead vocals out there. Reminding me a little bit vocally of By A Thread, and Ignite (all at different points), lead singer, Jelle Schrooten conforms aptly to the challenging tasks set up by the dynamic rhythm section. In a weird way, Face Tomorrow are kinda like a mature, well-aged version of Thursday or Finch (OK, maybe that's pushing it too far), without the screaming. Digging through voluminous tension and dense layers of instrumental craft, "The Closer You Get" has a remarkably impeccable feel to it, throughout all 50 minutes. Face Tomorrow aren't a band that will rope you in through catchy choruses, or brutal breakdowns - rather, they'll tap into the part of your brain that demands greater nourishment, and offer a healthy buffet. Lastly, like all recent releases from the Reflections' camp, the artwork on here is of the highest caliber, with one of the best digipak foldouts that I have ever seen. Free Face Tomorrow from obscurity in the US I say! Leave that hairbrain emocore disc behind (yes, that means you, the kid holding the Hawthorne Heights CD) and experience a band that is immersed in the art of composing well-written songs! (Reflections Records > Spoorwegstraat 117, 6828 AP > Arnhem > The Neatherlands) - Jordan A. Baker

Far "Water & Solutions" CD/ DVD

This is one of the good things to come from indie/emo/whatever becoming huge. Since bands have name dropped Far for years now and since Kerrang gave them some lame tag like "best post hardcore record" the fine folks at Immortal hope to cash in on the craze. I'm just glad to see "Water & Solutions" back in print because this is a great record from an even better band. The treat of this re-release is the addition of a live DVD performance when the band opened for (at the time) a little known band called Incubus. This is worth owning yes, but Far's "Tin Cans With Strings To You" needs to be re-released as soon as possible. That album kicks! (Immortal) Seth Brown

Franz Ferdinand "S/T" CD

The single "Take Me Out" is worth the price of this record. Think the Strokes meets Radio 4. Some records deserve short reviews, this is one of them. Go get this record today! Franz are worth every bit of the hype they get. (Sony Records) Seth Brown

The Good Fight "Breathing Room" CD

When word of this band first filtered around, many anticipated what it would sound like since this band has such a rich history in the fact that The Good Fight contains members of Harvest, Season of Fire and Threadbare. Combine all of these influences and add a modern day hardcore band into the mix like The Promise or Comeback Kid and you are on the way to one breathtaking EP. While this only contains two brand new tracks and their previously recorded

demo, this is a great glimpse into what the future may hold for them. Since the next full-length is coming out through Indecision Records, this will serve as their introduction. What a way to make an impression. Seek this out. (Goodfellow > 762 Upper James St. Suite 275 > Hamilton, Ontario L9C - 3A2 > Canada) Ray Harkins

Heaven Shall Burn "Antigone" CD

The rule of thumb in general for European hardcore is that either tend to be on the cutting edge of something intense or they are a few years behind what is happening in the U.S. climate. For Heaven Shall Burn's case, having been around for quite some time, they helped develop a sound for years to come alongside their peers Caliban. This is uncompromising, intelligent and thought provoking which in today's music scene is quite an afterthought. Musically it does not differ to much from their last releases but with a crisper production that makes the band sound absurdly heavy. The time for this band is now as this is their definitive release available worldwide for the masses to consume and in this reviewers opinion, must be consumed for your own benefit. The kicker is that they include a Disembodied cover, who doesn't like that? (Century Media / Abacus > 2323 West El Segundo Blvd > Hawthorne, CA > 90250) Shawn Gardner

Hot Cross "Fair Trades And Farewells" CDep

Never have I heard such an intense EP that murders their previous full-length. Usually an EP is just some filler so people will not forget their bands name and get some new material out there but this is just focused passion and aggression. Hot Cross feature members from every band that mattered during the mid to late 90's "screamo" explosion from You And I to Neil Perry and the amazing thing about it is they more they play together, the more they distance themselves from that "scene." This is one of the best things to come out this year. (Level Plane > PO Box 7926 > Charlottesville, VA > 22906) Ray Harkins

InMemory "In So Many Words" CD

Alright, so generally speaking, I'm really not into what's going on this so called "pop-punk" genre, but on their debut full-length, titled "In So Many Words," Simi Valley California's InMemory has impressively created their own sound in this otherwise inane scene. With Jeff O'Rourke behind the board, these guys put together a well crafted album of twelve songs that sounds clean, hard and extremely energetic, giving nods to such bands as Hot Hot Heat and Story of the Year, but most importantly, without trying. Even though this CD didn't come fully packaged, the sample of the cover art on the one sheet looks pretty damn cool. Very Dali-esque, which I like, so kudos on that. All in all I'd say that both DoughMain Records and In Memory have a real winner on their hands so

keep an eye out for this one. (Doughmain > PO Box 1489 > Thousand Oaks, CA > 91358) Shawn Gardner

Irradio "Make-Up For The Inaugurated" CD

What we have here is what I would like to call "carbon copy manipulators" which sounds like a harsh term but bear with me. Irradio are splendid musicians that all seem to have inspiration from a different place in music but all are equally as good. The four of them get together and start writing songs similar to some of their favorite bands like Fugazi, No Knife and Jawbox. Great start for being inspired by the greats rather than the flavor of the week. The only problem is that they are playing with a style that is untouchable. Bands like Fugazi and the like have PERFECTED it and leave very little room for growth as they have done it themselves already. Not to say that there is no need for a disc like this, it reminds the "newer" kids to delve back into their older brothers music collection, and it makes us older folk dust off our seven inches and lay on the floor like we were 16. (Grey Flight Records > 16458 Bolsa Chica Street #409 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92649) Ray Harkins

J Church "Society Is A Carnivorous Flower" CD

Man on man, I'm torn. If you asked me eight years ago if I saw J Church still being around in 2004 I wouldn't have believed it, and even more I wouldn't have expected them to put out a bad record. J Church are one of those bands that has been around for a long time and released tons of records, but up until around 1998 they were usually great. Since then it's seemed to have been a downhill slump - and very easy to disregard. I think that might have to do with all of the line up changes. J Church in it's prime were a tight guitar / bass / drums pop punk band. Now they just sound sloppy and tired, and "Society Is A Carnivorous Flower" is proof. I feel bad saying all of this since I do consider myself a fan of almost everything Lance Hahn is involved in, but in recent years nothing has grabbed me. Maybe next record, who knows - but as of now I will pass until something astonishing happens in their songwriting. (No Idea > PO Box 14636 > Gainesville, FL > 32604) Shawn Gardner

Liars Academy "Demons" CD

Equal Vision's forgotten band. In between releasing Coheed and Cambria and many of the other hyped acts that are on their roster people tend to forget that there are other bands represented by them that are not a part of the current trends like Liars Academy who feature members of Cross My Heart another forgotten act. I would be hard pressed to say this is a great record that is better than their first full-length but this blows away some of the other bands trying to

pass off this style of music as their own. This is a good representation to show that the "old" guys know how to do it better than the kids. (Equal Vision > PO Box 14 > Hudson, NY > 12543) Ray Harkins

Lickgoldensky "S/T" CD

Without sounding like I give the best seal of approvals, which I don't think I do, I can say that if there is one band this issue I hope people will check out it's Lickgoldensky and their newest self titled CD. It's the best heavy record I have heard so far this year. This noise, hardcore, punk band has always been a mystery to me, and in receiving the record the mystery was still unraveled. Who is this band? A band that puts out a full length yet has no info on the backside of the CD, and no song titles! I love it! The design is great with an awesome choice of colors used (purple, yellow, white) and is overall very minimal. Lickgoldensky are one of the few bands around now that represent that whole DIY, Ebullition records hardcore sound that has died fast in recent years. Thank god for Hot Cross, Plot to Blow up the Eiffel Tower and Lickgoldensky - three bands that are being individuals, and not playing by current rules. Snotty vocals over heavy music is a great combo, take note kids. I can't say enough good stuff about this band, and this release. I want them in the next Status, who do I need to talk to about this? (Level Plane > PO Box 7926 > Charlottesville, VA > 22906) Seth Brown

The Locust "Follow The Flock, Step In Shit" CDep

It's The Locust! Do you really need a review? They are the innovators of grind making it cool for kids that don't wear butt flaps to like fast, loud and obnoxious music. This is some of their older material compiled on what looks like a 3" disc. I personally am a fan of their earlier stuff such as this in comparison to their newest material. You need one of em', you need em' all. Add to your collection. (31G > PO Box 178262 > San Diego, CA > 92177) Ray Harkins

Lords "The House That Lords Built" CD

Although I usually love this style of music and respect this label - I gotta admit that Lords are a little too predictable for a band trying to play off the crazy spastic DC influenced sound. I felt every change coming before it did. Maybe I'm schooled in the classic bands that influence Lords. Those being Karp (a lot of Karp), Ink & Dagger (early I&D), Rye Coalition. The one sheet says the "comparisons aren't obvious, because Lords are sharp enough to know not to rip off their influences." OK.....well I beg to differ. Don't get me wrong, Lords are a good band for only being 2 guys (guitar / vocals & drums) but maybe the genre they are going to appeal to should be the kids who don't know the bands listed above.

Because this is just too much like the great bands and their sounds that ruled the early / mid 90's. One a positive side, the art and the layout is incredible. Eye candy indeed. (Initial > PO Box 17131 > Louisville, KY > 40217) Shawn Gardner

Misery Signals "Of Malice and the Magnum Heart" CD

A friend recently described "Of Malice and the Magnum Heart" to me as having "so many holy shit moments!" I believe that my friend is more than accurate. Misery Signals is a fairly unique band, containing members from both the US and Canada (they must have crazy work visa issues) who have previously made headlines with their prior bands - the well-known 7 Angles 7 Plagues, and the tragedy stricken Compromise. Thus it's hardly surprising that Misery Signals' brand of fierce metal core is a jumble of hostility and sorrow, linked together responsively through an incredible heaviness (produced and recorded by Devin Townsend) and somewhat spiritual atmosphere. Musically, Misery Signals remind me a bit of From Autumn To Ashes, circa "Too Bad You're Beautiful," as well as Solid State legends, Strongarm, and predictably, 7 Angles 7 Plagues. "Of Malice and the Magnum Heart" is filled with lengthy, well-developed songs that singe the ears of the listener. Remarkably precise and powerful drumming constructs the backbone of this release, and the swirling guitars leave little room for much external interference. There's a bit of a sing/scream vocal dichotomy going on, but it's more like "Opposite of December" Poison The Well, rather than any of the contemporary screamo garbage. As for the breakdowns/mosh parts, "Of Malice..." does not disappoint, especially on the epic finish to the fifth track, "The Stinging Rain," and the entire seventh tune, "Murder." As Misery Signals can both prove their worth through punishing mayhem, and serene melodic interludes, "Of Malice..." feels like it grows to some endpoint as the disc plays forward -- like a projectile fired up into orbit, vanishing into the darkened skies. Ferret has been on a tear lately with their heavier bands, and "Of Malice and the Magnum Heart" may just be its most ambitious release yet. (Ferret > PO Box 4118 > Highland Park, NJ > 08904) Jordan A. Baker

Mock Orange "Mind Is Not Brain" CDep

Everyone loves that feeling when they first discover a band primarily on their own rather than being dictated what is good and not good. Mock Orange can easily be that example in my life as I simply bought their first disc because I found it for cheap in the used bin but then was opened up to a world of Jimmy Eat World like harmonies coupled with intricate guitar work similar to Fugazi and No Knife. Then to

my knowledge they dropped off of the face of the earth, until now and resurfaced with a new record, sound and label. Distinctively different than their previous work, Mock Orange opts for a more Built to Spill approach in their song crafting. While some may consider this a creative step in the proper direction, I feel like they could have honed their focus in the direction they were heading with previous work. Not bad for a change of pace but misses the mark here. (Silver Three) Ray Harkins

Old Man Gloom "Christmas" CD

Members of Cave In, Isis and Converge come together for their fifth outing as Old Man Gloom - with a record that is the sound of the fall of Babylon, the journey to Valhalla and the crumbling of Superman's Fortress of Solitude all colliding at once. This is as heavy as prog gets - bombast, doom and hardcore mythology detailing the fall of civilization as we know it and the end of humans. How do you review dementia, anyway? (Tortuga Records > PO Box 291430 > Los Angeles, CA > 90029) Charles Spano

Grant Olney "Brokedown Gospel" CD

Austin's Grant Olney combines jazzy progressions and horns with the subtlety of Nick Drake and the emotion of Jeff Buckley. This is one of the great singer/songwriter albums of the year, a record that - similar to Baxter Dury's debut - sounds of another time and place entirely. Olney has a way with deep Leonard Cohen vocals, fragile melodies and a deeply longing delivery. This is one of those records that grows on you as you realize just how delicately powerful it is. (Asian Man Records > PO Box 35585 > Monte Sereno, CA > 95030) Charles Spano

Only Crime "To The Nines" CD

Easily one of the most hyped bands out, Only Crime consists of members with a solid background in punk rock. Only Crime members we once in or are currently in The Descendents, Good Riddance, Bane, ALL, Hagfish & GWAR. "To The Nines" is the punk & hardcore record these guys had in them but wasn't let out in their previous bands. Bane & Good Riddance sounded always mediocre to me, Only Crime blows them away in my opinion. Much more power, intensity and technical. Oh and it helps to have a punk rock legend behind the kit, Bill Stevenson. I can't tell yet if this is a full time or part time thing but I hope they stick it out because they are one of the best new bands out right now. (Fat Wreck Chords > PO Box 193690 > San Francisco, CA > 94119) Shawn Gardner

Pensative "What's the Problem is...?" CDep

Easy goin' hip hop in the vain of Tribe Called Quest, Black Eyed Peas and Jurassic 5 is the name of the game for Pensativa. While this disc lacks the innovation of J5 or the way-out new

sounds from the Streets and Dizzee Rascal, it has great grooves, rock-influenced beats and a satisfyingly toked-up delivery. Well worth it. (DoughMain Records > PO Box 1489 Thousand Oaks, CA > 91358) Charles Spano

Pines "S/T" CDep

A neat embossed slipcase drew me into listening to this record. With only four songs and no information on the band it was difficult to get their gist but from what I could decipher it lies somewhere in between a lo-fi version of The Fucking Champs meets a stoner rock band like Kyuss. It kicks into a groove at times that I can really get into but at other times, it just plods along. Who knows what is in store for these guys but from this glorified demo it looks like not much. (Grey Flight Records > 16458 Bolsa Chica Street #409 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92649) Ray Harkins

Planes Mistaken For Stars "Up In Them Guts" CD

So I realized I've been living in a cave for the past five years as I have never heard Planes Mistaken for Stars up until this point in time. Before listening I took the chance to look over the artwork and packaging which a) is pretty damn cool and b) makes total sense when you hear this record. The recording, knobbed by Mr. AJ Mogis at the famed Lincoln studio known as Presto, offers a really dark and haunting atmosphere to the entire package, as well as a really heavy and crunchy sound which is liable to blow your mind, and most definitely will. There's certain aspect to their music which seems mildly tribal which only intensifies this record's overall mood and character. This is definitely a record you need to hear, especially if you're like me and have never heard these guys before. Do yourself a favor and crawl out of your cave and go buy this record. Rock. (No Idea > PO Box 14636 > Gainesville, FL > 32604) Shawn Gardner

Potshot "Dance To the Potshot Record" CD

Punk rock dance ska played as broad and bombastic as it gets. This is sing-along two-tone punk with a little Ramones flavor thrown in for good measure. It doesn't sound particularly innovative to my ears, but damn, it's pretty infectious. (Asian Man > PO Box 35585 > Monte Sereno, CA > 95030) Charles Spano

The Pretty Weapons "The Pretty Weapons" CD

A melancholy, thunderous and stoned record, this self-titled debut finds the pretty weapons merging the grandiosity of Cave In with the wall of sound of the Jesus and Mary Chain or Black Rebel Motorcycle Club. This album doesn't do much to differentiate the band from its influences, but it hardly matters - it's so delicately powerful, unbridled and restrained, a wash of astral surf

rock and Brian Jonestown Massacre retro grooves. Every song on this album is a great one, and while it's not "Psychocandy" and there's no "Head On", the Pretty Weapons have crafted an album as atmospheric and rock-existential as as the best druggy space garage music, from Spiritualized to the Warlocks. (Uprising > PO Box 490 > Laguna Beach CA > 92652) Charles Spano

Ricanstruction "Love + Revolution" CD

This is a striking album of incendiary revolution, mixing hip hop and hardcore like Rage Against the Machine. There's no doubt these guys are legit - the title track features Chuck D for goodness sake! And Ricanstruction sound like no other band - powerful, uncompromising and relentlessly aggressive, "Love + Revolution" exists at the crossroads of Bad Brains and Public Enemy, Living Colour and Ozomatli. It's one of the most unique political albums of the year and the bold originality and guest stars alone (including Vernon Reid and Chuck Treece) should make everyone sit up and listen. (Uprising > PO Box 490 > Laguna Beach CA > 92652) Charles Spano

Rush "Feedback" CD

I know what you are thinking, "Rush in Status? What gives?" Nothing gives - Rush is fantastic and more underground kids need to check them out. This is math rock meets pop music. Anyhow, on Feedback the band decided to do something you wouldn't expect - they recorded seven of their favorite cover songs from when they were young. This is an odd move for Rush seeing how they, up until this point, had only covered three songs live in their 30 year career -- so they release of this is both exciting and very random. Chances are most people who read Status have not listened to any of these bands original versions (minus The Who) and that's a shame -- because the bands covered are great and highly underrated. The Yardbirds, Buffalo Springfield, Cream, Love & The Who all get a new sound thanks to these Canadian gods. Viva la Rush! (Atlantic Records) Seth Brown

Since By Man "A Love Hate Relationship" CDep

I'm a fan, but I wish this was a full length and not a CDep. Since By Man can be thrown in with many others in the screamo hardcore genre, but on the bands debut full length "We Sing The Body Electric" I found myself being caught up in the whole listening experience, I didn't quite get that with "A Love Hate Relationship". CDep's are what they are, and these four songs sound like Since By Man that's for sure. Vocalist, Sam Macon seems to be using distortion on his vocals in every song now, which might get old seeing how he has one of the best talking voices in hardcore. He does the whole "snotty talking / singing" thing perfect. I guess I will have to wait until the next

full length, but for now this will hold me over. (Revelation > PO Box 5232 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92615) Seth Brown

Sparta "Porcelain" CD

One of the driving factors behind Sparta is balance: the ability to balance crisp drumming and spacey guitars with singer/guitarist Jim Ward's scratch-throat vocals and grungy rhythm guitar. After "Wiretap Scars", many fans of At The Drive-IN didn't know how to interpret Sparta. Was this the band that showed glimpses of post-hardcore goodness with tracks like "Cut Your Ribbon"? Or was this a group using atmospheric effects and dreamy verses, as in "Glasshouse Tarot"? With their sophomore effort, Sparta solidifies that they aren't just one or the other, but equal parts of both, able to seduce the listener into a safe lull before attacking with heavy, intense choruses. It's a challenge for any producer to capture such a diverse sound, but Mike Major managed to do so perfectly. Unfortunately, the gleaming production on "Porcelain" really makes Ward's raspy lyrics stick out, and it does take the listener a while to adjust to the flat toned singer. Still, Sparta has released a disc that should solidify their style, and prove once and for all that it is a band to be reckoned with. Sparta is at its best when attacking in full force; tracks like "Splinters" and "End Moraine" are blistering displays of how the band delicately balances a reserved fierceness with precise musicianship. Ward, guitarist Paul Hinojos, bassist Matt Miller, and drummer Tony Hajjar are all perfectly in tune with one another, and at the bands most impressive moments, the drums and guitars seem to alternate in duel assaults. The first single, "Breaking the Broken," isn't the best "radio single" in the world, but it is a perfect example of Sparta's strong suits: dreamy lead guitars layered over dynamic rhythms by Ward and Hajjar. The second and third tracks, "Hiss the Villain" and "While Oceana Sleeps", are probably the most memorable on the disc, but "Lines in the Sand" is easily the most powerful, emphasizing optimistic lyrics that would be hard to conceive after everything that Ward has had to endure since the last album, including the death of his cousin Jeremy Ward (of The Mars Volta) and his grandfather. "Porcelain" carries a heavy tone, and it seems like Ward is fighting with himself on every track, but "Lines in the Sand", despite being rather forgettable instrumentally, is an emotionally uplifting song, ending with the reminder that "Only you with time can define your life/ It's yours". "Porcelain" is a solid disc, and with everything that the group had to overcome prior to this release, it's impressive that they came out with something this respectable. Sparta was caught in a rough situation after signing to Geffen: trying not to alienate fans of their past efforts, but establishing the band

as an independent force, both mentally and stylistically. Thankfully, they managed to pull it off, and despite everything the group has had to endure they have gritted their teeth and put out a disc that is genuinely Sparta. And if you don't think that means much, you probably still won't be able to appreciate what this band has become. (Geffen) Elliot Cole

The Start "Initiation" CD

The Start mixes garage, the futuristic sounds of Milemarker and a touch of No Doubt into a catchy but uncompromising punk rock assault. This music is danceable, contagious, even MTV-ready, but on songs like "Life Is Sweet" and "Peacocks" they come on with simmering aggression and an apocalyptic vision. One of the rare occasions that an album is well-suited to mainstream radio and your stereo. (Nitro > 7071 Warner Ave FPMB 736 > Huntington Beach, CA > 92647) Charles Spano

The Static Age "Amphibian" CDep

Tarantulas knows art design and thanks to that this release has some of the most beautiful packaging and CD art that I've ever seen. And the music, though limited to three songs, is quite good. The Static Age sounds like the Cure being covered by post-punk kids. The title track is anthemic in that John Hughes movie sort of way - think Simple Minds playing with the skills of Joy Division and the art rock outlook of Wire. (Tarantulas Laboratories > 3371 Glendale Blvd. # 471 > Los Angeles, CA > 90039) Charles Spano

Taking Back Sunday "Where You Want to Be" CD

The adage of "don't fix what isn't broken" has proven to be true for numerous bands over the years. On their full-length debut, "Tell All Your Friends," Taking Back Sunday channeled into to a mostly consistent pace, with twin, receptive vocals, churning dual guitars, and rapacious drumming. The band dabbled with other bolt-ons throughout the release, emphasizing screaming here and there, and in general sticking to a verse/chorus/verse formula that never failed to rope in a big hook. On the fantastically anticipated follow-up to "Tell All Your Friends," Taking Back Sunday (with 40% new personnel) zeroed in on what they did best the first time around, and nailed down a thunderous sound that's now entirely their own -- huge choruses still intact. First and foremost to appreciating "Where You Want To Be," is an understanding that this is nothing but an aggressive rock album. Irrespective of how this album has been marketed ("the voice of the emo generation" - HA!), the foundation of every song on here is built around a convincing melody and clever,

poignant interaction between the woven dual vocals. Maybe I'm just a lush for sweat soaked hooks, but Mr. Lazarra and company have no problem sticking it to me with words that are effortless to sing along to. Songs like "A Decade Under The Influence," "Set Phasers to Stun," and "Number Five with a Bullet" ooze with a smarming dose of guts and glory, even if it's buried in self-reflective despair. Although the eleven songs on here are mostly cut from the same mold, the band does branch out slightly to the softer side ("New American Dream"), or more successfully, to the heavier side ("The Union"), where some of the band's collective hardcore influences peak out from the shade. I've had a difficult time getting the line "I've never made a scene / it came to me," out of my head for weeks now, and I'm afraid such removal may be hopeless. "Where You Want to Be" finishes up strong with the final two songs, "Little Devotional," and "...Slowdance On The Inside." So few bands leave memorable songs towards the end of a tracklisting these days, and Taking Back Sunday thankfully show consideration for leaving on a strong note. "Where You Want To Be" has all the essential qualities of being of a memorable, long-lasting release. Behind much of the gobblygook that will no doubt, try to squeeze this band into the ill-fated modern screamo genre, Taking Back Sunday arrange far more substance to their songs than the seldom vocal wrenching (even if the same formula is hammered down for 75% of the songs). And while the self-indulgent, yet painfully obfuscated lyrics may tire on some listeners after a swift period of time, the honest truth is that for eleven songs, "Where You Want to Be" is a top-of-the-moment exhibition that shoots straight from a brain in overdrive. For previous fans, and first time listeners, there's few if any things to dislike about "Where You Want To Be." (Victory > 346 N. Justin St, Suite 504 > Chicago, IL > 60607) Jordan A. Baker

Terror "One With the Underdogs" CD

It's sort of an odd example of social commentary when Trustkill has to slap "This Is Real Hardcore!" sticker on the front cover of Terror's "One With the Underdogs," but at the same time, I absolutely understand the point that is being made. Terror, as a musical entity, is not out playing music to be your friend; is not writing songs to 'get the girl,' and fuck no, Terror is not concerned about dancin' the night away. "One for the Underdogs" is a release that pummels right from the start and doesn't let up with its bulldozing direction for a brisk, brutalizing 25 minutes. Terror, unfortunately, is part of a dying breed of national hardcore bands that can still pull this old-school style off, and every day, it feels like their company gets smaller and smaller. On the band's debut release for Trustkill, and second full-length overall (assuming "Lowest of the Low"

passes full-length muster), what you get with "One for the Underdogs" is exactly what one would expect from Scott Vogel and company. Upfront, hard-hitting, blood-spitting, venomous fury, pushed further by the blessing of modern recording qualities. Although some will undoubtedly claim that this disc is too well-produced (especially compared to the audio blur that is "Lowest of the Low") and too polished for what "real hardcore" has to sound like, I more or less find myself dreaming about what some of the early Sick Of It All and Cro-Mags releases would have sounded like if recorded under these conditions. For sure - the raw power and aggression would be almost deafening. With dual guitars a blazin' and machine-gun tight drumming dominating much of this release, at times, it makes one wonder how at all Vogel is able to rise above the chaos, but much like Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta, Vogel manages to stay one-step ahead. On head turners like "Spit My Rage," and "All I've Got," Vogel's investment in hardcore music (spanning through successful stints in Despair and Buried Alive) bubbles over into uncontainable momentum. "One of the Underdogs" constantly surges back and forth with towering waves of guitar chuggs and wild breakdowns, but it never loses sight of the 'keep it simple' formula. Completing this release is some of the most impressive artwork that I have ever seen. Besides having an insert booklet was some great live photos, the actual CD is plated with vinyl on the face-side and is made to look like a 33 rpm record. Apparently this is the "limited edition" version of the release, but I don't believe that its distribution is all that small. There's no foolin' about what goes into a Terror release - blood, sweat, and a whole lot of heart. "Real hardcore's" light may be shining a little dimmer these days, at least looking down from the surface of a very confused subculture, but for those whose passion has never been second guessed, the flame burns just as hot. (Trustkill > 23 Farm Edge Ln > Tinton Falls, NJ > 07724) Jordan A. Baker

This Moment "Finding A Voice In The Dark" CD

I love when I get self-released records from bands because it shows they are willing to make that financial sacrifice on their own to get their foot in the door to take their band seriously. A burned copy of your CD send to a magazine obviously will not get as much attention as an actual hard copy of a disc, which is exactly why This Moment is getting a review in these pages. While you may hear modern day influences like Killswitch Engage and Cave In laced throughout the recording, I personally hear a large Torn Apart influence that beckons back to a day where the importance of groove was placed over everything else. The production is pretty slick for a glorified demo and the kids can sure play. I am sure a bright future is in store for them. (Self Released) Ray Harkins

Time In Malta "Alone With The Alone" CD

From the first minute you can tell whom you are listening to, but that isn't a ban thing. Yes, it's Time In Malta but it's a different sound then usual. They do that distinctive melodic post-hardcore sound, except this time it's a lot more hardcore then you might expect. The band seemed to have gained this punch from the bass played now singing alone - you tend to rock out more and it's proven to be true on record. The three-piece Time In Malta simply couldn't sound like the band that is playing on this release. Without a doubt they are still one of the most underrated bands going, and that's a shame. But to those who know what's up, we enjoy the music and hope that one-day they will be as big as they deserve to be. I'm certain that if this band was 19 years old they would be huge, but the stigma of age in hardcore has seemed to have hurt them. God forbid a band is still playing good music in their mid - late twenties! Two thumbs up. (Equal Vision > PO Box 14 > Hudson, NY > 12543) Seth Brown

Tippa Irie "Sign of the Times" CD

Brit rasta Tippa Irie is one the great current Reggae musicians, toasting with a laid-back talking style that has had as large an impact on hip hop MCs from the Black Eyed Peas to Busta Rhymes as it has on the Reggae community. "Sign of the Times" is his most definitive work thus far and would make a great companion to a night of the Streets. (Resin Music > Hermosa Beach) Charles Spano

Travoltas "The Highschool Reunion" CD

Nostalgic, hilarious and a serious joke - "The Highschool Reunion" seems a mix of would-be sitcom theme songs, 80s new wave and a straight-up pop punk approach. While the Travoltas aren't going to win any points for innovation, it's a fun listen and the keyboard hooks on songs like the title track are pretty infectious. Weston's "A True-Life Story of Teenage Rebellion" did this better and in a more genuine way. But, in all fairness, that's not really what the Travoltas seem to be going for. Their send-ups of the Class of '88 are maybe more about the 80s than high school itself, which makes this a true reunion. And no one else has really managed to sound as much like the 80s since the 80s. That's gotta count for something. Now if they only sounded more like Devo. (Fastmusic > PO Box 206512 > New Haven, CT > 06520) Charles Spano

Triple X Audio "The Wreckage and Reclamation" CDep

Triple X Audio is a great boy-girl rock group that draws on everything from the Pixies to the Breeders to Nirvana to create its crunchy, shout-along, pop infused punk rock. While not as contagious as the best work of their forbears, The Wreckage and Reclamation" EP grinds along with the atmosphere of "Surfer Rosa." This is a band that's going places,

for sure. (Self Released) Charles Spano

Tusk "Tree of No Return" CD

Neurosis and Comets On Fire are the best heavy psychedelic bands playing right now, and while "Tree of No Return" is not quite in their category, Tusk is one of the most unique and, I'd venture, unstoppable bands playing today. Sort of like the Locust of doom metal, Tusk is caustic and unapologetic. For some, I expect this group might have the Kyuss effect - everyone loves the music, but not everyone can deal with the vocals. Still, "Tree of No Return" is some of the most raw and powerful sounds your apt to hear, ever. (Tortuga Records > PO Box 291430 > Los Angeles, CA > 90029) Charles Spano

Various Artists "Rock Against Bush Vol. 2" CD / DVD

Just perusing the line-up on the back of "Rock Against Bush Vol. 2" makes me crack a smile. The caliber of talent that was procured for this release is mind-boggling - you've got unreleased, rare, or live songs from Green Day, Foo Fighters, Jawbreaker, Yellowcard, Dropkick Murphys, Sleater-Kinney, and a tune from rock giants, No Doubt. While Fat Wreck may not exactly be an independent label run out of a person's garage with only one phone line (that would be Asian Man, at least according to their ads for the past five years), one should not lose sight of how tremendous the scope of this "Rock Against Bush" project has been. A target audience has been marketed to, and political discussion has become an increasingly viable and present element among those prepared to vote this Fall. "Rock Against Bush Vol. 2" is a solid musical compliment to the first volume and like its predecessor, provides a remarkably diverse range of sounds for such a focused undertaking. Kicking off this puppy is Green Day's "Favorite Son," a song that appears to have stemmed from the "American Idiot" recording sessions, but not onto the upcoming full-length. It looks like these guys have gotten over their "Warning" inspirations and have folded back into manically tight and absurdly catchy pop-punk. Color me stoked! Bad Religions's heady "Let Them Eat War," a stand-out track from "The Empire Strikes First," folds nicely into the thrid tune, Operation Ivy's classic "Unity." Undoubtably, there are going to be thousands of people who will be purchasing this release who weren't even born when "Unity" was released. While that makes me feel old, that does give me some confidence that another generation of fans will continue to keep that band's work alive and in high regard. The Lawrence Arms deliver a fun laugh on their fantastic song, titled "Necrotism: Decanting The Insalubrious (Cyborg Midnight) Part 7." All I hope is that somewhere, somehow, Davey Havok chuckled just a little after hearing about this. As for the song, The Arms

are loaded to the teeth with wit, and have one of the best dual-vocal combinations on the planet. "We Got The Power," the unreleased track by the Dropkick Murphys' is a straight-up pro-union anthem - honestly, how long will it be before the AFL-CIO invites them to become a house band? The song's sort of predictable, but if you're a fan, there's much to savor. Only Crime show up with "Doomsday Breach," a song from the band's stellar debut, "To The Nines," and its political invective feels right at home on this release. Foo Fighters' "Gas Chamber" cover of the Angry Samoans' tune is alright, but I've heard better - the recording on this version seems to indicate the band recorded it in one take and not everyone was on the same page. Oh well. Lagwagon's unreleased tune "Status Pools," scuffs nicely along, and appears to be a b-side from the band's "Blaze" recording session. Nothing amazing, but good nonetheless. Rancid are featured with the closer from their classic, "Let's Go," entitled "7 Years Down." I've never really heard this song out of context from "Let's Go," so its placement on here took me some time to get into, but I think it fits real well against the next tune, an unreleased gem by Sleater-Kinney. I don't think I'll understand how this wildly talented female act did not achieve world-domination with it's glorious pop-rock sound. The first half of Vol. 2 wraps up with Yellowcard's cheeky cover of Lagwagon's "Violins." Personal opinions are going to run rampant on this cover, especially since "Violins" is largely regarded to be one of the 'wagon's best songs, but I'm of the verdict that there's "no harm, no foul" with how Yellowcard treats it and anyone possibly turned on to the Lagwagon for the first time from the song is just gravy. Dillinger Four come crashing noisily with their unreleased burner, "Like Sprewells On A Wheelchair," and while this one has all of the trademarked D4 characteristics in check, it's missing a great hook to put it over the edge. Jawbreaker's famed inclusion on here is a live contribution of "Chesterfield King," which goes down smoothly into the Bouncing Souls' live version of "Born Free" (great lyrics on this song). A surprisingly good track emits from The Dwarves with "Kids Today," which according to the booklet features the musical backing of The AKA's and The Matches in some fashion (not that such was noticeable in any way from the song). Sick Of It All deliver the heaviness with their grinding "Can't Wait To Quit," which stands up strangely against No Doubt's following tune "Comforting Lie." Another unexpectedly cool tune arrives from Israel's Useless ID, with their song "State of Fear." These guys have vastly improved over the years and are one of the last champions of melodicore. Autopilot Off's b-side is average, as is the new song, "My Star," from The International Noise Conspiracy, but the lower portion of this disc does finish up real strong with a great

unreleased track by Hot Water Music titled "Kill The Night," (so many great guitar leads, song after song) and No Use For A Name's acoustic rendition of "Fields of Agony." Turning to the DVD portion of this release, there's another interesting hour or so of content to run through. Of the five videos featured, Bad Religions's quasi-animated "Los Angeles Is Burning," and NOFX's hilarious "Idiot Son of An Asshole" are worth repeated watching. The six political shorts are pretty cool too, especially Robert Greenwald's "Uncovered: The Whole Truth About The Iraq War," which takes a stab at a lot of the misleading statements and intelligence manipulation that was fronted for convincing Americans that a pre-emptive strike was needed against Iraq. The three comedy pieces on the DVD are fantastic - and not surprisingly in the least, the "Bush Straight Talk" sketch by Will Ferrell is strikingly entertaining. Much like the insert booklet to volume one, each band on here gets a little spot to say there thing about the importance of this release (though most just include lyrics and a photo), and there's political facts, lists, quotes, and comments littered about. Anti-Flag's Justin Sane takes the lead article in the booklet introducing his reasons to "Rock Against Bush," and it's a rather funny piece, though there's little funny about much of the serious points mentioned. This is another one of those really long reviews that could have been summarized by seven simple letters: "Buy This." Punkvoter's entrenchment and conviction towards removing Bush from office has been unwavering from the start - and with over 250,000 copies sold of the first volume in barely two months, it's clear that there's a tremendous audience paying attention. And while there's still a few months to go before Punkvoter may see any fruit born from its efforts, at least the organization can take some comfort in that it helped provide some mighty fine tunes and educational content to the public along the way. (Fat Wreck Chords > PO Box 193690 > San Francisco, CA > 94119) Jordan A. Baker

The Walkmen "Bows and Arrows" CD

When I listen to The Walkmen's latest release, I wonder why it wasn't released as two separate EP's. One of these EP's I would love and listen to frequently, the other EP, however, I would completely disregard. The single off the record, "The Rat" is one of the better songs I have heard this year in the genre, but the rest of the album doesn't quite reach its level of writing. "Bows and Arrows" is split up in such a way that the even numbered songs are fast-tempo, hard-hitting, melodic rock and roll songs, but the odd songs mainly consist of three or four chord progressions played all too slowly on highly delayed bright guitars and echoed piano and raspy synth sounds. Aside from structure and changes, I found these songs to lack an important key factor: climax. The songs seem to build and build

but abruptly end before any point is reached. The melodies are weak and almost come off as improvised. Leithauser's vocals are mix between Bono and Bob Dylan giving him a weathered, cigarette smoke quality to his voice that makes it seem as though the band was heavily sleep deprived in the studio; as if the act of striking the strings of a guitar or lifting the hand high enough above piano keys to make a strong enough tone was too much of an effort to be taken seriously. (Record Collection > 1223 Wilshire Boulevard #899 > Santa Monica CA > 90403) Tyler Rogers

Warped Tour 2003 DVD

I often wonder if a normal person off the street would do a better review of all of the festival tour DVD's out there. Maybe they could see much more than I see. Music reviewers either understand the product 100% or they just scratch their heads wondering how to explain such an obvious DVD release. So with that said, this is a DVD of the 2003 version of the Warped Tour. It has one song from each of the bigger bands to play during the tour and (as you might expect) the quality is top notch. There are not many moments on this that have a true punk feel. It feels like it's done by punk rock producers shooting with a professional camera that could buy a little house, or pay a few months rent one in California. If you are a fan of overpolished punk tours and enjoy bands like Rancid, The Used, Sun 41, The Ataris, Pennywise, Thrice, Andrew WK, Mest, Simple Plan, Something Corporate, Face To Face, Less Than Jake, Dropkick Murphys, Glassjaw, Tsunami Bomb, Poison The Well, Vaux, (and a shit load of others) you might find something good to say about this. (Kung Fu Records) Shawn Gardner

STATUS LIVE REVIEW

THE STATE OF THE (ROCK) NATION Polyphonic Spree at the El Rey Theatre, Los Angeles, July 23, 2004

Last night, a rock and roll band saved the world - at least for an hour or so. In front of a huge banner emblazoned with the word HOPE, the Polyphonic Spree (I counted 22 of them, all twirling, brightly-colored robes) gleefully danced, played and belted their hearts out to the crowd at Los Angeles' El Rey Theatre. In a time when independent rock music is still marked by a cult of cool - the lyrical ennui of did they or didn't they mean it, the Spree, from the horn section to the backup singers to the Theremin player, risk making audiences cringe with words so

sincere and boldly uplifting that they can only be called life-affirming. And the band emerges all the better for it. This is music that at least seems like it can change the way people think and live and treat one another.

Jon Brion, the opener and a true blue, LA bittersweet pop songsmith, had it right: "we're about to see one of the coolest bands walking planet earth," he announced. "They're gonna bring enough positivity to last all of us for months." To some, the Polyphonic Spree must come across as a sun worshipping, pie-in-the-sky cult - and the robes and ecstatic Moonie grins sure don't help disproving this case. But, at the El Rey that night, we all knew they were the real deal. The group is gifted with a sense of melody and harmony that is part Paul McCartney, part Burt Bacharach. On Together We're Heavy, the outfit's new and second album, the Spree exhibit a psychedelic wonder that is a bit like the Flaming Lips performing the musical Hair. They've finally given their music the production it deserves: a warm analog sheen that would have pleased the Beatles and is perfect to carry these sun-dappled choir anthems. Not only are these songs about love, peace and understanding, but the upwardly spiraling horn parts and empowering, chant-along vocals ("hey, it's the sun and it makes me smile,") just make you feel good. It's the inner, physiological response I have to songs like "All You Need Is Love" and "Don't Worry Baby."

I admit, bands are at an advantage with me. I want every rock group I hear to overwhelm me like Jon Landau hearing Bruce Springsteen for the first time. But the Von Bondies seem bland, the Secret Machines colorless and I have tried - and failed - on three separate occasions to get Franz Ferdinand. Recently John Frusciante (of the Red Hot Chili Peppers as well as a stunning solo career) told me that the only real judge of music is how it makes you, personally and individually, feel. "There's just something about some music that makes you feel so good," Frusciante said up on Mulholland, sitting on a park bench overlooking Hollywood. "I believe that it just puts your subconscious in order, it straightens things up. The music that we really love puts all the bad things that have happened to us in order in our head and makes them make sense and makes it good that they happened the way that they did."

Then there are some bands that don't make me feel a thing. I wonder what they are even feeling themselves. But, Tim DeLaughter - the Polyphonic Spree's musical reverend and frontman - madly conducting the audience with a giddy, wide smile across his face is obviously feeling a lot, and isn't too cool, or afraid, to show it.

So we sang and pogo-ed and danced along to all

of it. The tubular bells, Audrey Easley's flute and piccolo and trumpet, the french horn. When did you last dance to a french horn at a rock and roll show? These tunes are like Brian Wilson's "teenage symphonies to God." The popular "Light and Day" off of the band's debut ignited the audience. But it was the new songs, "Hold Me Now," "Two Thousand Places" and "A Long Day," wherein DeLaughter professes that we'll "somehow find a way," that made me a true believer.

In what? Well, not in God (I don't, and I don't think that's the point of the Spree anyway), but in people actually making things better. This is the summer of the optimist. The summer of those of us who believe that war will end and that empire will retreat, that it's getting better all the time and all you need is love, that America can reach out to the world and it's own citizens with generosity, that we can have a living wage, that we can hear a multiplicity of voices, that more people will listen to Ralph Nader, that Howard Dead and Dennis Kucinich have woken up the Democratic Party, that Gavin Newsom will run for president in 2016 and that "hope," as John Edwards first promised us, is really "on the way."

I wonder if we could get all of the legislators, leaders, dictators, policy makers, soldiers - all of the people - in that room with the Polyphonic Spree if it could make a real impact on peace in the world? I'm not sure, but the important thing is that a band has made me willing to ask the question.

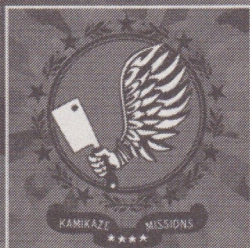
After the show, as we filter out, Thunderclap Newman's "Something In the Air" plays on the PA. "Call out the instigators, because there's something in the air, we've got to get it together sooner or later because the revolution's here." And I believe that the words of that 70s song are true again. Because a couple thousand people singing in unison, "you've got to be good, you've got to be strong, you've got to be two thousand places at once," is heralding change, and has made some kind of difference in their hearts. And this means it can surely make some kind of a difference in their daily lives, however subtle it may be. - Charles Spano



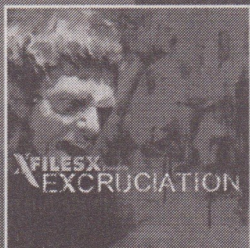
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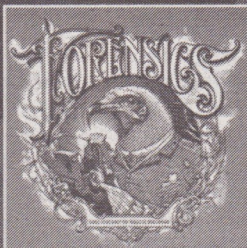
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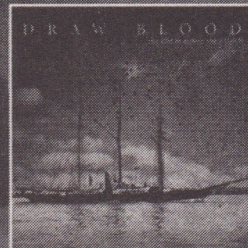
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LOVE ME DESTROYER

Every time I listen to Love Me Destroyer's disc, "Black Heart Affair," I am reminded of why I found punk rock so alluring in the first place. These guys carry with them a timeless sound of fast beats, buzzing guitars, driving bass lines, and lead vocals that you hang to almost instantaneously. Combining melody with sheer aggression, the end result is a well-worn, universal sound that no one

should pass up. As talked about below, Love Me Destroyer are hardly newcomers to the halls punk rock, with most of the band previously spending a decade playing in the sorely under appreciated Pinhead Circus. Nothing has come easy for these guys, and the scorching anthems on "Black Heart Affair," wear such scars proudly, from song to song.

There's one particular line in Love Me Destroyer's bio that sticks it out in my head - it reads, "Love Me Destroyer was born from the ashes of Pinhead Circus and along the way picked up Chip, formerly of Phoenix legends, Jedi Five. The guys were poised to learn from all of the errors of their past bands and were ready to make a new name

for themselves." That's a pretty loaded statement. Can you please discuss what kind of blueprint gets put down to get such a fresh start going?

It starts with having four irreplaceable guys that are all on the same page, not having a different guitar player every six months. We all want to tour our asses off and work hard at this. We want to concentrate more on success outside of our hometown, not get burned out locally. We are putting the rock before anything else.

I think it's pretty distinct that Love Me Destroyer have gone in a heavier direction than Pinhead Circus. Usually, I find that musicians go the other way as they put more time into punk rock. So what's fueling this added aggression?

We are fueled by real life. Referring to the first question again, how many bands do you know that have been doing this for 10 or more years with little success? You tend to get a bit jaded, to say the least. Add in jobs, rent, women, booze, and everything else. You just start to write about how you're really feeling. Not sad or optimistic, but pissed off!

With a title like "Black Heart Affair," it's hardly surprising that the lyrical content on the disc is less than "pleasant." How difficult is it to play songs that seem so emotionally charged? Does playing the material over and over eventually dull the cathartic effect that the lyrics might have had in the first place?

Not at all. If it were to start to get dull, the second you see a kid screaming those words back at you so compassionately, it's impossible for that song not to be

emotionally charged. The whole reason we write and play music is to do it live!

You guys recently did a tour with Digger, another band that has sort of been through the ropes. Can you talk a bit about that trek and any future touring plans? Name a few bands that are on your shortlist to bro down with.

That tour was definitely interesting. Them being a pop band and us being, well...not. There were a lot of young kids staring at us, kind of terrified by the old sketchy tattooed guys. It seemed like these kids didn't understand what we were trying to do. Our age definitely showed a bit as well. As far as touring goes, we went out last summer with Planes Mistaken For Stars, which was amazing. We'd love to do that again. We're hoping some friends (The Bronx, Rise Against, The Lawrence Arms) might want to do something sometime. Really, though, I don't think anything would be cooler than a Dillinger Four tour.

When not on the road, how does each band member make a living? And if plans for world domination are somehow involved, we'd be stoked on reading an abstract.

Corby and I are typical musicians in the food/drink industry. Dave's a mechanic and Scooter, well it just depends on what week it is. He's doing live sound and works at a few local rock venues. Everyone in a band has at least a tiny bit of world domination desire. Our goal is to bring the "fuck" back into "rock and fucking roll." The words "punk" and "rock" are being used very loosely these days. MTV showcases it as being acne ridden kids singing about the hot chick in English class. We beg to fucking differ!

I noticed you guys worked with Chris Fogal of The Gamits in producing "Black Heart Affair." How was that experience? I just heard their new release, "Antidote," for the first time yesterday, and I think it's a big step up in growth for them. Is keeping everything within the Denver community something of a mission for the band, or is it just what's practical at this point in time?

Our experience at 8 Houses Down was awesome. Everyone there seriously knows their shit! Keeping things within the Denver community is definitely practical, but it's all about the No Coast Death Squad. Everyone in the scene here is so supportive of everyone else's projects, and the more we all try and do for our community, the more we might be able to bring the attention off of the coast! Besides, it does seem like lately a lot of what has come out of CA is overproduced, regurgitated cookie-cutter shit! Your hometown is always going to influence your music. We are proud of that and want to keep it that way. We're not going to work with some producer who doesn't know us or our music, but knows what's "hot" right now.

Besides lowering the barrier to entry of widespread advertising, the Internet's second largest impact on punk rock has been spreading rumors and gossip in a more efficient manner. Toss out a few ruminations for our dear readership about your band (and others) that are entirely not true, but provide top-quality entertainment.

The untrue: We didn't all blow up in a meth lab. The true: We've all been stabbed at least once in the underground knife fight club that we own. - Jordan A. Baker

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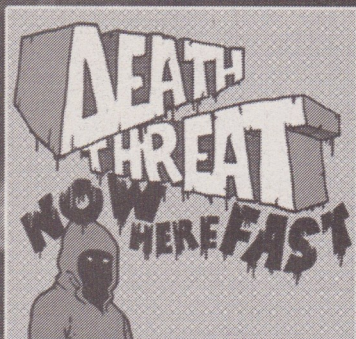


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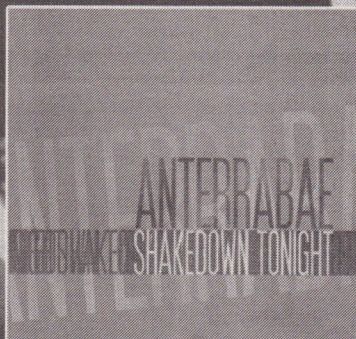
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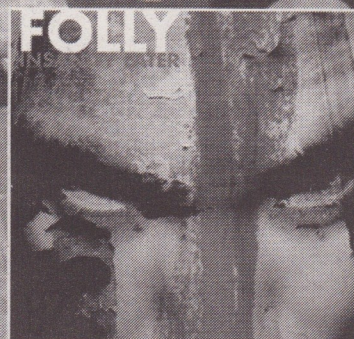
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THE EPIDEMIC
'Now Museum,
Now You Don't'



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'Scenes One
Through Thirteen'



KIND OF LIKE
SPITTING
'100 Room'



ROCKING
HORSE WINNER
'State Of Feeling
Concentration'

BACKSTABBERS INC

Given today's musical climate, it is hard to decipher who is pulling out all of the stops and giving it their all and who is merely just trying to rehash the same perspective but to a different crowd. Backstabbers Incorporated are not one of those bands. Free of cliché's and agendas, this five (sometimes four) piece from the New England area hammers out some of the most intense, gut-checking songs released in the past few years. Speaking to the vocalist Ryan, you can only get a glimpse of the urgency in which he speaks. Regardless the Backstabbers are your soundtrack to a rage infested night or simply, a mouthpiece for everything you wanted to say but could not.

How has the reception been for your newest full-length? From what I can tell fans and critics alike are raving about it.

It's gotten a pretty great response feedback-wise. We were really hoping that kids would grasp onto it, and it seems like slowly but surely that's what's happening. It's bittersweet right now, though, since what we really want to do is get out there and tour and prove that this album wasn't a studio trick. We want to be able to show the passion and rage is true and real.

I know you had been having line up issues over the past few months. Was there ever a time where you felt like calling it a day and hanging it up?

Speaking for me, personally, hell yes. It's just incredible the amount of setbacks we've had. Sometimes it's been too much, and I really want to throw my hands in the air, give up, and move on to different creative outlets that I haven't had time to explore yet. I think this band will always exist in one form or another, but there will finally come a time where this won't be my main focal point for artistic output. But right now, and at least for the next couple years, this is my baby, and I can't let it go dying without a fight.

Your song writing lends itself to a more "violent" manner than most bands. Does

this worry you at times with the hardcore scene becoming more rampant with unnecessary violence?

Not really. Yes, the scene has become a more violent, knuckle-dragging, spin kick wielding playground, but there are still the intelligent ones out there that know that there should be (and IS) more than the cookie cutter acts that are dished out at these shows. We play for those kids. We don't give the idiots enough to work with in our songs. No bullshit catch phrases, and no songs written around breakdowns. There's a way to translate anger and hostility and violence without coercing a crowd into turning on each other, and that's what we've set out to prove.

One your first EP, the last song you use a long clip from the movie starring Al Pacino called "Scent Of A Woman". Quite an unlikely choice but what prompted it?

Watching that movie, I couldn't help but to feel for Charlie. I couldn't help but to relate. I think that movie reflected the everyday thoughts of common young people like me. We watch the fortunate walk away unscathed and praised, while the ones without much to call their own are given the shaft. The liars, the cheats, and the pompous, arrogant assholes are the ones that own our world and run it. What Pacino said in those 5 minutes was not just dialogue from a script, I feel it was the voice of millions who won't sit down and roll with the punches. As the applause fades out on the CD, and you hear the gavel being pounded, you hear Pacino say "Nothing can shut them up, sir..." and goddamn if that ain't the truth.

Do you feel like bands today play

out of necessity or just to simply "rock out"?

It would be easy to shit on every band that I feel is in it for the wrong reasons, but I don't waste enough time paying attention to them. I will say that a lot of sincerity has been lost and that bands have learned to cater more to what is the hot talk of the moment. It's not hard to sift out the crap, I just feel most don't bother caring enough to do it.

What is the one label or person that you respect most that is currently involved today?

It would have to be Mitch (trash art). Not only because we're on the label, but I've watched the dude bust ass for years to try and help out his bands. He doesn't have big money behind him, or the scene connections that make putting records out a cake walk. But what this guy has is an incredible amount of patience, a sincere heart for extreme music, and a work ethic that is unmatched. Someday when we get a drummer, we'll actually reward him for all his hard work, and actually tour to promote the record.

Do you feel that Backstabbers Incorporated is still involved in the current state of hardcore or could you see your band as fitting in with a more "historical" scene?

We've never fit into any version of the hardcore scene. Some may say that that's a copout, but we've been in this band for 6 years now, and that gives us enough experience to know that the music we've created is more for ourselves than the massive hardcore audience. I myself have always felt like an outsider no matter what I do, so this is no different. Not to say we have no friends in the scene and all that, it's just that I think we have a different outlook on what is involved within all of this. I guess that, if anything, we are more accepted in the current state of hardcore, since today's scene is more open to a different thought process on what is considered "core" enough.

Seeing as you played the New Jersey Metal and Hardcore Festival, do you feel that hardcore and metal are one in the same now or are their still distinct differences between the two?

Whatever line there was between the two, it's pretty much gone, and I think that's great. Who gives a fuck whether it's hardcore or metal or punk? If the stuff is good, then it's good. Judging music by categories or genres is fucking stupid. Why waste time laying down guidelines as to what fits into what when they really aren't necessary? Rules and barriers and categories are what fucks this scene up. - Ray Harkins



INMEMORY

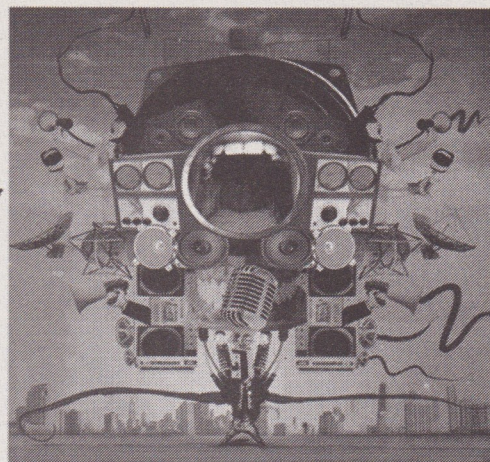


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THE DISTANCE

You see the statement "like a musical punch in the face" from time to time in some awful review about a band that probably is as threatening as day old milk, you wonder what it would feel like to have that description handed to you. While many attempt, few deliver I think The Distance can deliver, if not a punch, at least a good quick jab. This interview was conducted on their west coast jaunt with Comeback Kid, Some Kind Of Hate and Champion after their show at Chain Reaction.

Do you guys feel a responsibility to maintain the tradition that comes with being associated with "Connecticut Hardcore" or do you just want to blaze your own path?

Jay: That's actually a great question because between me and Leg you're covering years of hardcore. Before Leg was in The Distance, he was in Fastbreak. Before I was in The Distance, I was in Voice of Reason. So when it was time to do a new band, I definitely felt like Connecticut needed a push in order to change the scene. We came about at the same time as bands like With Honor and it has been awesome ever since. Now there are kids who are back into the scene, there are new bands and new zines. It's a whole different attitude now. The timing was just right for everything. Connecticut is back, and it's really awesome.

For a demo that was released only in the

Northeast, you guys seem to have gotten a lot of attention. Can you speculate as to why people latched on to what you were doing so quickly?

You know, honestly, I think it was just timing. Hardcore was really ready for a change. There was a lot of tough guy, hard stuff coming out. It was stuff that I put out (Jay runs the label Stillborn), but I think that kids were really ready for old school stuff to come back. They were just looking for faster, traditional hardcore and Connecticut hadn't put something out like that in a long time. Because of that demand I was really excited to do a new band. When we did the demo we didn't put any "ex members of" on it, which I think ultimately helped us because kids weren't influenced by the perceptions they had of our prior bands. We recorded with Dean at Atomic, the packaging was done really nice, and we got it released on Takeover Records with Scott McGrath. He had just finished the Terror seven inch and everything just seemed to line up right. I think all those factors only helped kids to get into the band. With that, one thing led to another and we ended up on Bridge Nine.

I'm sure you have noticed the influx of traditional hardcore bands as they pop up all over the United States. Do you think that this has led to a watering down of the scene? Or do you think it is, in a way, a rebirth?

I don't feel like it's a watering down. In a

way I'm kind of psyched because for a while it seemed like the scene was getting flooded by metalcore and the tough guy thing. While we like a lot of those bands, at the same time it seemed like it was time for this style to come back again. There are lots of bands out there trying to do this and doing it horribly, but luckily the bands that are doing it well are the ones who are ultimately getting the most attention. It's cool because you can look at bands like Stand and Fight or Outbreak or Some Kind of Hate and its good, quality stuff and those are the bands that you hear the most about. You hear about those bands way more than you do the crappy, old school revival ones. We're psyched to be a part of that. We don't want to brag or anything, but we're excited to be a part of the resurgence. We're glad that kids like us, and we're grateful for that everyday. We say that on stage, and I will continue to say that until the day I die. If it wasn't for the kids, we wouldn't be able to do the things we do. Just from doing the label and working with a lot of bands I've seen how quickly people can forget where they've come from, and we know we never want to do that. Every time we play we remember that if it wasn't for the kids, no one would give a shit. It's awesome, Hardcore kids come first, and you want those kids. The other kids come and go. While it's nice to have those kids too, it's the hardcore kids who will stick it out with you.

You guys recently filmed a video with

Dale Resteghini. How did that whole process go?

It was awesome. Dale is actually one of my really good friends. I've worked with him a lot because he did the Hatebreed and Sworn Enemy videos, so in a way he and Stillborn kind of came up at the same time and I always knew that he had my back. He did the video for almost nothing and now it's supposed to be on The Headbanger's Ball, which is exciting. That's huge for us and it's huge for Bridge Nine. It's unbelievable, it's just an EP. We've just always been so lucky. Everything has always aligned itself really nicely. We were able to record with Zeus, who did Shadows Fall and Hatebreed and all these big records, and then we got to shoot this video with Dale. Everything has just been such a great experience. Kids are either going to love it or hate it, but if people were in the position we were in where your friend says 'Hey, I want to do this video for you,' I don't think anyone would turn it down. We had a lot of fun doing it. We don't regret it at all. It's opened up a whole new avenue of things for us to do. We're hoping that if we get the mainstream attention of being on something like The Headbanger's Ball, then other bands that don't get attention, bands that are better than us, will be benefited as well. That's what we're hoping for anyway.

Do you think that vinyl, as a way of presenting music is dying, or do you think that it will always have its place within this type of music scene?

It's funny because we've done some tours with the more nontraditional hardcore bands and kids see seven inches and are like 'What's that?' and that's a little weird. From a label point of view I don't do it anymore. It's too much of a niche market. Kids who are into Sworn Enemy probably aren't going to want it on red vinyl. They just aren't into it. I like it. We like it. To us, if we see our stuff on vinyl that means we've made it. If anything, Hardcore will always keep vinyl pressing plants in business. Colored vinyl will always be way cooler than any CD. Unfortunately, we're

not too big in that scene. I don't think the collector kids really like us. You never know though, Bridge Nine is a very vinyl driven label. So we'll see. Anyone can do a cd these days, but you still can't press records at your house.

This is your first time coming to the west coast. Do you notice any huge differences between the east and the west?

We could not have asked for a better situation. To come out here with awesome bands like Champion and Some Kind Of Hate and play sold out shows is great. We are loving every second of it, and we make sure to tell the kids at all the shows how grateful we are. The thing we've noticed on the west coast is how receptive kids are. Kids here don't treat opening bands like opening bands. We played first and it was crazy. I don't want to diss our coast, but we are having such a great time out here. Sometimes I ask myself what I'm even doing, I mean I'm 25 years old and I've been into this since I was like 15. I quit my "normal" job to do a label and dropped out of school to do the core and stuff, but when you get out here in front of like 300 kids who are genuinely psyched to see you, you know exactly why you're doing this. We've been so blessed to be able to do all this. We've met awesome people and played awesome venues. We could not have asked for a better first time.

Okay, this is kind of a funny question. But what is the most crucial "go" ever? Now this doesn't have to be what everyone would agree on, just what you think.

This is going to be weird because it's newer, but honestly, American Nightmare, the first seven inch in Ice Age Is Coming where he says "go" and it comes in real fast. That gives me chills.

Name your number one rule while on tour.

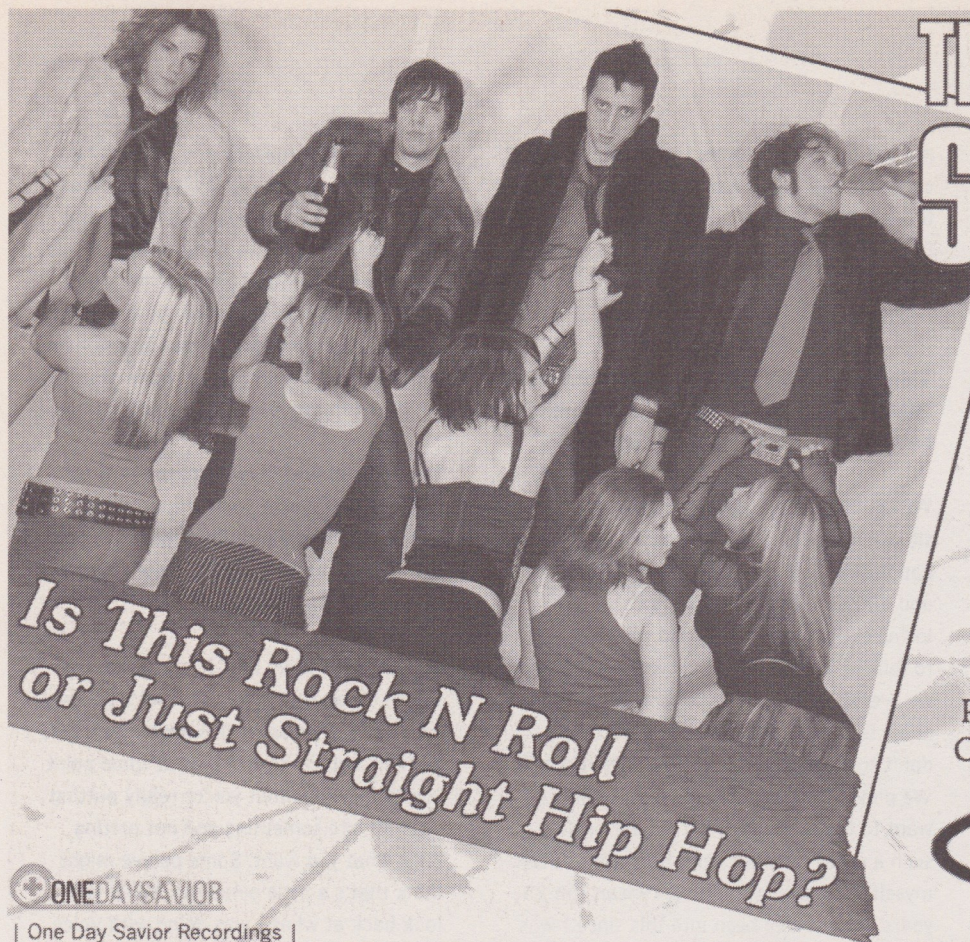
It's easy. We don't let Dobbins (bass player) drink alcohol. He can't handle it at all. One sip and he's done. He turns into a loud mouthed trouble maker, yelling at girls and

stuff. He just turned 21 and we took him to Las Vegas for the first time. Oh, man. We made him drink a 54 ounce beer out of a football. We have pictures of it. It was pretty great. Number one rule: We don't let Dobbins drink. Unless we push him into it, then it's purely for our own amusement. Don't get me wrong though, none of us are big drinkers. We are, however, big gamblers.

Lyrical speaking, you guys seem to stick to a straight forward, no frills approach. Some people might criticize that for being too cliché. How do you respond to that opinion?

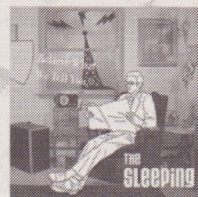
For me, everything that I talk about and say on stage, that's my life. That's the way I feel. I've been doing this for ten years, so it's only natural to feel that at some point you're failing or that you're really putting your all into something and not getting back what you want. Some people might think that's a little gimmicky, but if you look back at what I was doing with Voice of Reason you'll see that I was talking about the same things then as I talk about now. Voice of Reason was all about singing about girls and self-doubt; it just wasn't popular to talk about that sort of stuff then. Now it's popular and people are just like, 'Oh, you're doing whatever is trendy' but people need to realize that when you write from the heart, you're really putting yourself out there and that is the hardest thing to do. You're letting people know exactly what you're thinking. At the same time though I know that what I'm writing is resonating with others because kids come up to me at shows and are like, 'I don't know you, but it's so weird because I feel the same way.' I understand the criticism because it seems like the trend in the core is to write about how you feel so bad or so angry, but at the same time you have to realize that a lot of people really do feel that way.

-Interview: Ray Harkins. Photo not available thanks to Bridge Nine Records.



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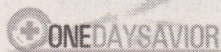
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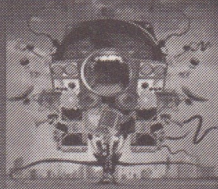
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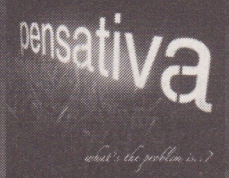


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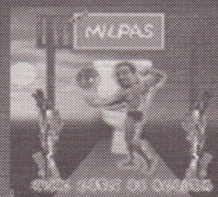
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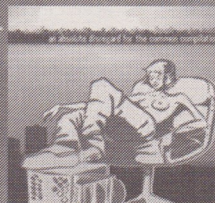
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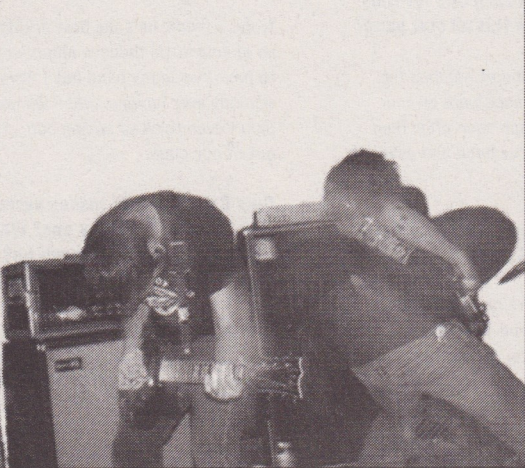
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killingdreams: hey dude, I need some info or promo like text to make an ad for Status. aaron: nah, forget that just have it be an interview. like you ask me something like, "What do you think is the biggest threat to the human race right now?" And I'll say, "oh, definitely the recently predicted resurgence by prehistoric beasts in developing countries. aaron: and you say, "prehistoric beasts?" killingdreams: um okay. aaron: yeah, sabertooth tigers, dragons, mastodons, and especially dinosaurs. they have longstanding connections with wmd programs in the northern congo, and they will likely have access to unknown oil reserves and precious stones. aaron: ya know since they've been way underground for so long. killingdreams: um, how will we know when this is going to happen and what does it have to do with your band? aaron: well, to answer your first question, if I know anything about resurrected prehistoric beasts (classified in the UN charter as "zombosaurs"), and I like to think that I know quite a bit, they really like symbolism. They will not launch their offensive until (a) things have calmed down in Sudan, and (b) a global holiday is upon us. killingdreams: what about the 2nd part of the question? aaron: come on, man, these things affect us all. It is our band's job to warn the masses, or at least the five or six people who come to see us on tour. aaron: let's face it, there are two kinds of people in this world: those who will mount a resistance against the imposition of militaristic, nuke-wielding beasts of yesterday... and those who won't

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Only Crime features an all star line up with members of Good Riddance, The Descendents, Bane, Hagfish & GWAR. Vocalist Russ Rankin was kind enough to spare four minutes for this interview. A man known for his great voice, better lyrics and maybe from this point on, known for his short answers to questions. Maybe he's just a man of few words – especially when doing laundry in Kentucky.

How are you today Russ?

Ok, kind of tired. It's 3am and we are doing laundry at a truck stop in Franklin, Kentucky.

The generic question, but a needed one for Only Crime. How did you guys form this all star band?

Well, me and Aaron (Dálbec) kind of hatched the idea when Bane and Good Riddance were on tour together in 2002. I recruited Zach soon after then Bill found out I was doing another band and asked if he could be part of it.

How did the first rehearsals go? Seeing how you didn't have a drummer at that point...

We didn't rehearse, we just wrote separately until summer 2003 when Zach, Bill and I spent a week demo-ing in Ft. Collins, Colorado. We got the bare bones of nine songs down.

Playing with Bill Stevenson must be a real treat. He is a punk rock legend. After all the years of recording with Bill in Colorado, did the idea of being in a band with Bill ever come up prior to Only Crime?

Nope. I mean, he's the best drummer I've ever heard so of course I'd thought about what it would be like to have him in my band but I never dreamed it would actually ever happen. When we needed a drummer I didn't even think of asking him - I thought he was way out of our class.

Only Crime on FAT makes perfect sense -- but was that the plan from day one? Where there any other labels you would have been on? Or is FAT just as easy to work with as bands praise them to be?

FAT was always at or near the top of our list. They have proven to be an amazing label as Bill and I have a lot of experience with them with our other bands. Once

word got out about our band there was substantial interest from lots of labels but, in the end, it came back to FAT.

With the record on FAT and a lot of internet hype prior to hearing the full length is it hard to try to live up to this hype? Or do you just not care -- hype can make you or break you.

Yeah - we don't care. This isn't any of our first rodeo so we pretty much know that if the music is good then the "hype" doesn't matter.

What kind of person does Only Crime appeal to? What crowd do you attract?

I don't know yet. I would imagine there is something for all the fans of our other bands plus something new and interesting that we alone possess.

Are Good Riddance broken up or on a hiatus? And what would you say was the cause?

As of now we are on hiatus. I would say the cause is everyone growing up and getting a life. We just aren't as available to do it at the pace we used to.

Is Only Crime a full time gig?

Yes. Considering all our other stuff and the fact that we all live in different states.

How was playing Hellfest this year?

It was surprisingly good. We didn't really know what to expect but the response was great and we got a lot of good feedback.

What's a normal night on tour with Only Crime like? Tame or crazy?

We have a lot of fun. The group has meshed together as friends really well. Other than that it's pretty tame, I mean, none of us really drink or do drugs or party or anything so we just watch movies and laugh about stuff - try to escape bill's farts.

On your online Journal (on the Only Crime site) you seem to write openly and honest. Especially your distaste for the way the scene ended up. You have good points, good rants, and I can see where you are coming from. On the other hand do you get problems from those who disagree? Scene pride can cause some drama...

None so far but I'm sure they're out there. It's just my opinion and I edit it a bit so as not to piss too many people off.

What is your take on this years election?

I will vote my conscience, which means I will be voting for the Green Party ticket - David Cobb and Pat Lamarche.

Although we can't predict anything do you think something like Punkvoter.com will help steer the younger generation away from Bush?

I think so - it sure can't hurt. Even if just a couple hundred people become compelled to participate in the public arena because of it then it was a success.

You have been a part of this scene for a while - you are still around, what keeps you going every day?

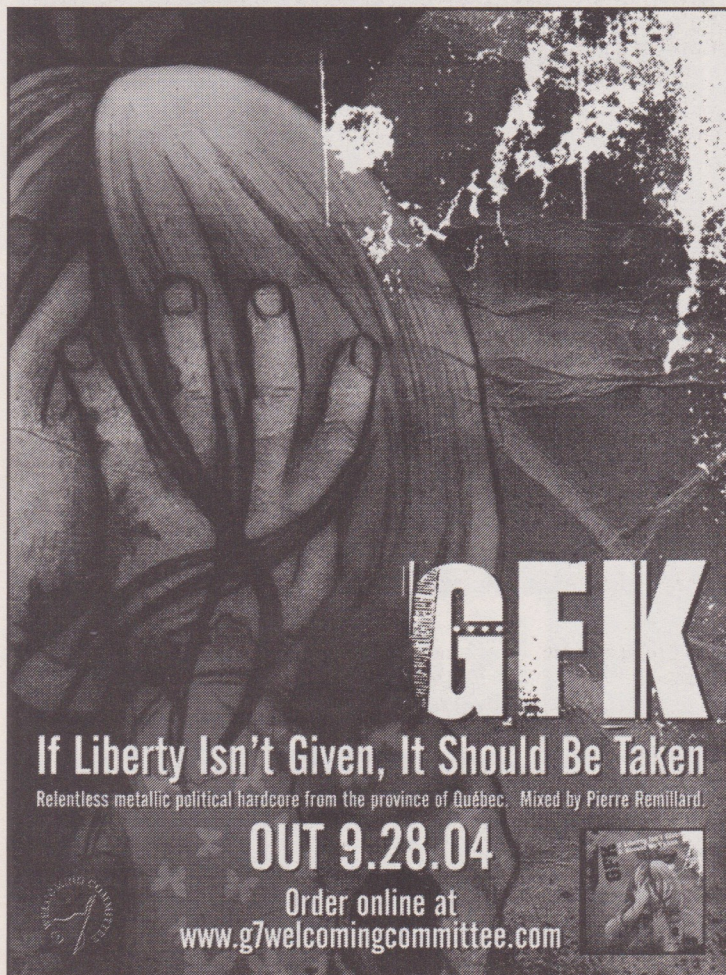
I just love and am passionate about punk rock, hardcore and this lifestyle. I feel fortunate to have found it. It's the only thing (besides hockey) that's ever moved me.

Tell us all about your label you run with Joe from Sessions. What are your goals with Lorelei Records? And how are things going so far?

It's going great! Joe actually does all the real work (haha). We are growing steadily and our bands are doing real well. Check out Los Dryheavers! They are fucking raging right now!

And now, the endless debate among edge and non edge. I'm addicted to a drug called caffeine. Sure it's a legal drug but a drug nonetheless. You being straight edge and also have a "passion" for coffee - can you be edge and drink caffeine?

Yeah I get that sometimes. I drink coffee and I consider myself straight edge. I really don't care what anyone thinks about it. I've been drug/alcohol-free for almost 17 years so I'm really not bothered with the whole drama around that stuff. - Seth Brown. Photo: Bryan Wynacht



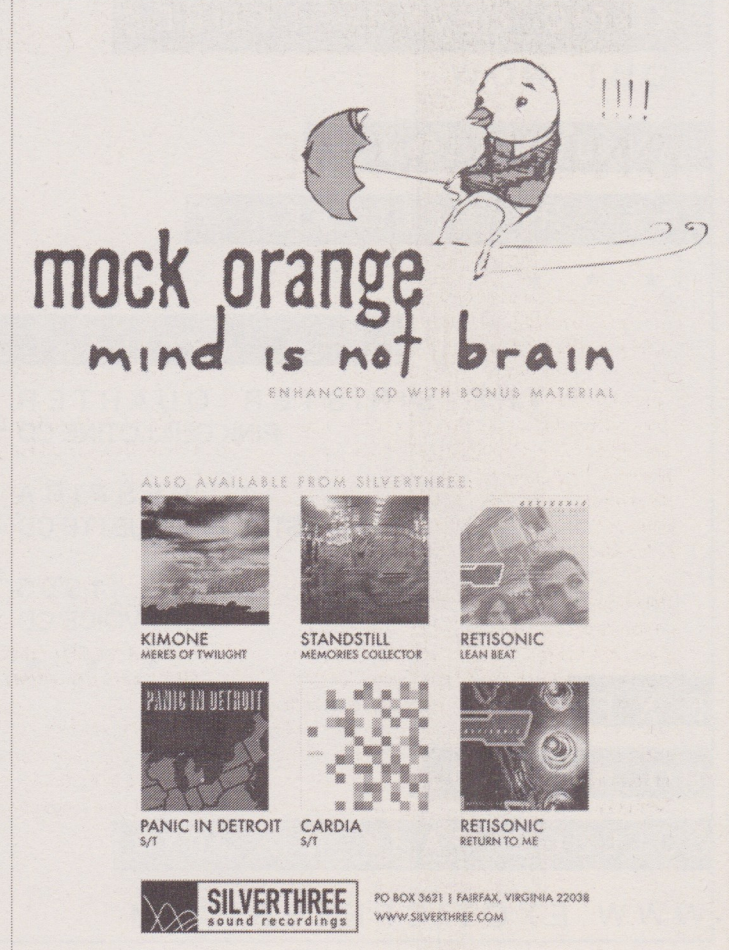
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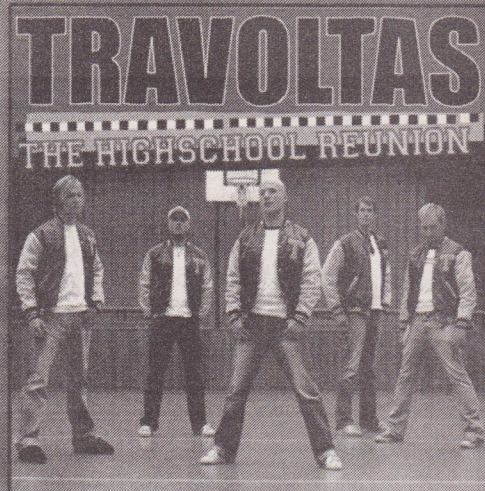
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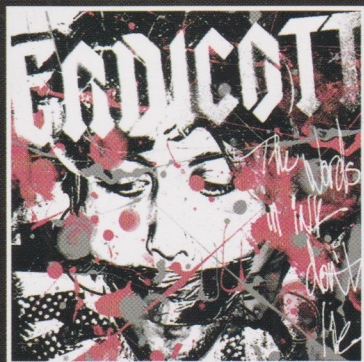
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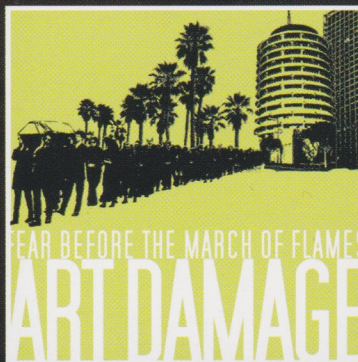


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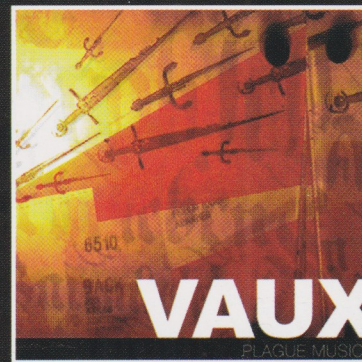
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09/17 WORCESTER, MA @ PALLDIUM
09/18 SYRACUSE, NY @ CLUB TUNDRA
09/19 PITTSBURGH, PA @ THE WORLD
09/21 ERIE, PA @ FORWARD HALL
09/22 FARMINGDALE, NY @ DOWNTOWN
09/26 PHILADELPHIA, PA @ FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
09/27 BALTIMORE, MD @ THE OTTO BAR
09/28 HUNTINGTON, WV @ HYAMP
09/29 RICHMOND, VA @ TBA
09/30 CHARLOTTE, NC @ TREMONT MUSIC HALL
10/01 GREENVILLE, NC @ PIRATE UNDERGROUND
10/02 ATLANTA, GA @ MASQUERADE



The Explosion's New Album 'Black Tape' in stores October 5th 2004.

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